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THE AUTHOR

IN FISH SKIN COSTUME OF THE GILYAKS.

THROUGH SIBERIA

By HENRY LANSDELL

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With Illustrations and Maps

SECOND EDITION.

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I inscribe these pages

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE

HUGH McCALMONT, EARL CAIRNS, P.C., LL.D.,

CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN, AND LATE

LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR OF ENGLAND, IN GRATEFUL

APPRECIATION OF OFFICIAL KINDNESS

MORE THAN ONCE ACCORDED ME

IN FURTHERING MY VISITS

TO THE PRISONS OF

EUROPE

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

BEING unexpectedly but agreeably obliged to prepare a second edition before the day for the public appearance of the first, I can do little more than express my gratitude for the favour with which my book has been received, and repeat what has already been printed. The kind and too favourable reviews that have thus far come under my notice seem to call for little remark but of thanks. One journal, however—the *St. James's Gazette*—has stated, on the authority of a Russian informant, that 'official orders were sent before me to the prisons to make things wear a favourable aspect for my visit.' I venture therefore here to repeat what I wrote to the Editor (but which he did not think fit to publish), that if his Russian informant, or any other, thinks that I have been duped or misinformed, I am perfectly ready to be questioned, and shall be happy to discuss the question in the public press, provided only that my opponent give facts, dates, names, and places, and do not hide behind general statements and impersonalities. My own conviction is that in the overwhelming majority of cases, at all events, I saw Siberian prison affairs in their normal condition.

With the exception, then, of a corrected note which appeared on page 37, vol. i., a slight re-arrangement of the bibliography and appendices, a few verbal alterations, and a *new and improved index*, this second edition is the same as the first.

H. L.

THE GROVE, BLACKHEATH,
20th February, 1882.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

THIS book is a traveller's story, enriched from the writings of others. In San Francisco an American Bishop said to me, "I hope, sir, you will give us your experience, for Siberia is a country of which we know so little." Accordingly, on my return, two courses presented themselves—either to confine myself to an account of my personal adventures, or to supplement them from published information, and describe the country as a whole. I chose the latter course, and the result is in the reader's hands. At the end of the work will be found a list of books consulted, to the authors of many of which I must acknowledge myself indebted for much scientific and technical information.

My speciality in Siberia was the visitation of its prisons and penal institutions, considered, however, not so much from an economic or administrative as from a philanthropic and religious point of view. Much has been written concerning them that is very unsatisfactory, and some things that are absolutely false. One author published "My Exile in Siberia" who never went there. "Escapes" and so-called "Revelations" of Siberia have been written by others who were banished only a few days' journey beyond the Urals;

whereas it is only east of the Baikal that the severest forms of exile life begin. None, so far as I know, who have escaped or been released from the mines, have written the tale of what they endured, and very few authors have been in a position even to describe what the penal mines are like.

It has been comparatively easy, therefore, in England for writers to exaggerate on this subject almost as they pleased, because scarcely any one could contradict them. Comparatively few travellers cross Northern Asia to the Amur. I doubt if any *English* author has preceded me. Probably also I was the first foreigner ever allowed to go through the Siberian prisons and mines. Perhaps none before have asked permission. That I obtained such an authorization astonished my friends, though the open manner in which the letter was granted seemed to show that the authorities had nothing to hide. A master-key was put into my hand that opened every door. I went where I would, and almost when I would; and on no single occasion was admission refused, though often applied for at a moment's notice. Statistics also were freely given me; but this was "not so writ in the bond." An afterthought, in Siberia, emboldened me to ask for them in various places, and they were usually furnished then and there. All these are displayed before the reader. I have exaggerated nothing,—kept nothing back.

I speak thus in case I should be thought to have written with a bias; but I had no reason to be other than impartial. Of politics I know next to nothing, and so was not prejudiced in this direction. Nor had I anything to gain by withholding, or to fear from telling, the whole of the truth. I did not travel

as the agent or representative of any religious body. Two societies, indeed, at my request, made me grants of books, and a generous friend provided the cost of travel; but the expedition was a private one, and implicated none but myself. I could not, of course, see matters as a prisoner would; but I wish to state that, having visited prisons in nearly every country of Europe, I have given here an unprejudiced statement of what I saw and heard in the prisons and mines of Siberia

That a foreigner, flying across Europe and Asia, as I did, is exceedingly likely to receive false impressions and form erroneous conclusions, is obvious to every one, and I claim no exemption; for though I have journeyed in Russia, from Archangel to Mount Ararat, yet my experience is that of a traveller only, and not of a resident. I do not even speak Russ, but have been dependent on interpreters, or information received in French. I trust, therefore, that no one may be misled by taking my testimony for more than it is worth. I have tried to be accurate, and that is all I can say.

Perhaps I may add, however, that my proof-sheets have been revised by Russian friends among others, and that most of the chapters concerning exile life have been submitted not only to a Russian Inspector of Prisons, but also to released political exiles who have worked in the mines. The latter endorse what I have said, and (with reference to the chapters on "Exiles," "Political Prisoners," and the "Mines of Nertchinsk") the Inspector has done me the compliment to write, "What you say is so perfectly correct that your book may be taken as a standard, even by Russian authorities." I have good hope, therefore, that in this

feature of my work, at all events, I have avoided misrepresentation.

On scientific subjects I cannot speak with authority; but I have been allowed to submit the proof-sheets to various friends, who have kindly read them with an eye to their particular studies. My thanks, accordingly, are due to Sir Andrew Ramsay, LL.D., F.R.S., Director-General of the Geological Survey of the United Kingdom; to Mr. James Glaisher, F.R.S., formerly of the meteorological department of the Greenwich Observatory; and to Mr. Trelawney Saunders, Geographer to the India Office. Mr. Henry Seebohm, F.L.S., F.Z.S., has read such paragraphs as relate to zoology and ornithology; and Mr. Henry Howorth, F.S.A., author of "The History of the Mongols," has afforded suggestions from his extensive reading in Siberian ethnology. I am also indebted for information concerning many Sclavonic words, manners, and customs to Mrs. Cattley, formerly of Petersburg, and a great traveller in Russia; and to the Rev. C. Slegg Ward, M.A., Vicar of Wootton St. Lawrence, for literary help. It is difficult to restrain my pen from mentioning others—the scores of friends who gave me introductions, the scores of others who received and honoured them—but if I once begin in this direction, where shall I end? I can only say that, for hospitality to strangers, Siberia carries the palm before every country in which I have travelled, and that from the day I crossed the Russian frontier till I reached the Pacific I met with nothing but kindness.

H. L.

THE GROVE, BLACKHEATH,
20th December, 1881.

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* *Most of which have been engraved from the Author's Photographs, and have appeared, as have some of the following chapters, in the "Leisure Hour," the "Welcome," "Sunday at Home," "Contemporary Review," and other periodicals.*

OBSERVANDA.

In proper names the letters should be pronounced as follows:—*A* as in *f*ather; *e* as in th*e*re; *i* as in rav*i*ne; *o* as in g*o*; *u* as in l*u*nar; and the diphthongs *ai* and *ei* as in h*i*de. The consonants are pronounced as in English, save that *kh* is guttural, as in the Scotch lo*ch*.

The dates are given according to the English reckoning, being in advance of the Russian by twelve days.

All temperatures are expressed according to the scale of Fahrenheit.

The ordinary paper rouble is reckoned at two shillings, its value at the time of the Author's visit; but before the Russo-Turkish war its value was half-a-crown and upwards.

English weights and measures are to be understood unless otherwise stated.

The Russian	Arshin	equals	28 inches	English
„	Sajen	„	7 feet	„
„	Verst	„	$\frac{2}{3}$ mile	„
„	Pound	„	14.43 ounces	„
„	Pud (or Pood)	„	36 lbs.	„
„	Rouble (or 100 Kopecks)	„	2 shillings	„
„	*Silver* rouble	„	3 „	„

MAP OF SIBERIA SHEWING THE AUTHOR'S ROUTE ___ 3000 MILES BY LAND AND 5000 BY WATER

THROUGH SIBERIA.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Object of the journey.—Interest in prisons.—Visitation of prisons in 1874.—Distribution of religious literature in Russia.—Tour round Bothnian Gulf, 1876.—To Russo-Turkish war, 1877.—To Archangel, 1878.—Origin of Siberian journey.—Alba Hellman and her correspondence.—The way opened.—Projected efforts of usefulness.—Books to be distributed.—Final resolve.

THE object that took me through Siberia was of a philanthropic and religious character; and before proceeding to a general description of the country, I should like to acquaint the reader with the circumstances that led me there. My interest in prisons dates from a visit to Newgate jail in 1867, followed by others to prisons at Winchester, Portland, Millbank, Dover, York, Exeter, Geneva, Guernsey, and Edinburgh: but this interest amounted to little more than curiosity. Two years later it took a practical turn. My summer holidays up to that time had been spent on the principle, "Play when you play, and work when you work,"—a proverb that is doubtless true, but which I had not found entirely satisfactory. I was minded,

therefore, to test another saying, that "the way to be happy is to be useful," and in 1874 was casting about as to how the principle could be applied to a tour of five weeks through seven countries, not one of whose tongues I could speak, when the visitation of continental prisons suggested itself, and the distribution therein and elsewhere of suitable literature. The Committee of the Religious Tract Society generously placed a supply at my disposal, and in company with the Rev. J. P. Hobson, then curate of Greenwich, I started for Russia *viâ* Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, intending to return through Poland, Austria, and Prussia. We saw the prisons of Copenhagen and Stockholm, but they were well supplied with books, and needed not our help; whereas, in the old castles used as prisons at Åbo and Wiborg, our papers were thankfully accepted, and in Russia quite a surprise awaited us. Without reason, I had feared that perhaps the orthodox Russians would decline to receive books from Protestants, as do the Romans. We found, however, that they would accept such books as had been approved by the censor, and accordingly we sent 2,000 pamphlets into the prisons of Petersburg, reserving a third thousand for giving away on the railway to Moscow, not knowing at that time that for such open distribution a permission is needed. I can never forget the surprise of the people and their desire to get the books. The peasants came and kissed our hands; the railway guards directed to us the attention of the station-masters, who came to receive our gifts. Priests took the books, and approved them; and many who offered money in return were puzzled to see it declined. Our stock was soon exhausted, and I determined some

day to make a tour in Russia to distribute on a larger scale.

In 1876 my holiday weeks were spent in a journey across Norway and Sweden and round the Gulf of Bothnia. Twelve thousand tracts were distributed, and visits made to prisons and hospitals, those of Finland being found inadequately supplied with both Scriptures and other books. On my return I brought this before the Committee of the Bible Society, and asked for a copy of the Scriptures for every room in every prison, and for each bed in every hospital, in all Finland. This they kindly granted, so far as to offer to bear half the expense with the Finnish Bible Society; and the plan, after some delay, was carried out. Scriptures were also to be provided, at my request, for the Finnish institutions for the deaf and dumb, and for the saloons of the steamers plying on the Scandinavian coasts.

In 1877 Roumania and the seat of the Russo-Turkish war was chosen for my holiday resort, with a view to being useful in the Russian hospitals. But I was too early, and my vacation too short; so that after visiting, on the outward trip, some of the prisons of Austria and Hungary, I returned, doing the like through Servia, Sclavonia, the Tyrol, Basle, and Paris. The mass of the prisoners were Roman Catholics, for whom I do not remember a single case in which the Scriptures were provided. Some of the authorities, however, said they would accept them if sent, and I therefore asked the Bible Society again for a liberal grant for the prisoners, the sick, and others of the countries through which I had passed. They were willing to make the grant, but the local agents reported many difficulties, and the result fell short of my expectations.

In 1878, therefore, I resolved upon a change of tactics, to take my ammunition with me, and carry out my cherished scheme for Russia. Considerable difficulties, however, lay in the way. An Englishman, unable to speak the language, going into the interior of Russia to distribute books and pamphlets, in the year of the Berlin Congress, towards the close of the war, would certainly not have been safe. No amount of official papers and permissions would have kept him out of the clutches of ignorant officials. It seemed necessary, therefore, to take an interpreter; and as the transport of heavy luggage in Russia is slow, and my books would accompany me as personal baggage, it was clear that the cost would be a great increase to holiday expenses. A generous friend, however, at this juncture, as also subsequently, came to my aid; and in the month of June I trotted out of Petersburg with about two waggonloads of books, a companion, an interpreter, and a sufficiency of official letters. We went by rail through Moscow and Jaroslav to Vologda, and thence by steamer on the Suchona and Dwina to Archangel. We distributed everywhere, —to priests and people, in prisons, hospitals, and monasteries, and created such a stir in some of the small towns that people besieged our rooms by day, and even by night. Our travel was necessarily so quick that we could not always inform the police beforehand of what we were doing, and more than once they came (as was their duty) to arrest us; but our encounters always ended amicably, and we reached home after a happy six weeks' tour, extending over 5,500 miles, in the course of which we distributed 25,000 Scriptures and tracts. These experiences in

some measure prepared me for my longer journey in 1879, the origin of which was somewhat remarkable.

When travelling round the Gulf of Bothnia in 1876, my steamer unexpectedly stayed for a day at a town on the coast of Finland. I was anxious to visit the hospital, and was inquiring about a horse, when a passenger said she had friends in the town, who, she thought, could render assistance. I went with her; and that simple incident may be said to have originated my subsequent tour through the prisons of Siberia; for it was followed by correspondence with a lady member of the family to whom I was introduced, Miss Alba Hellman, who began by modestly asking me, chiefly because I was an Englishman and the only one she knew, whether I could not do something for the welfare of the Siberian exiles. I confess that at first I thought this the most extraordinary request ever put to me, and it seemed too great an undertaking even to be thought of. Already immersed in work, regular and self-imposed, I had no time or means for such an undertaking; and if the money were forthcoming, who would go? Another question, too, arose: Would the Russian Government allow anything to be done?

The case of my Finnish correspondent, however, was a touching one. When in health she had been wont, like Elizabeth Fry, but on a smaller scale, to spend part of her time in visiting prisoners. Now, acute heart disease forbade such visits, and even compelled her to sleep in a sitting posture, so that for 2,068 nights, or nearly seven years, she never went to bed. My coming to Finland, visiting prisons, had awakened memories of her former work, and she set

herself, after my departure, to write me a letter in English. She had had only a few lessons in this language when a girl; but, possessing a Swedish and English New Testament in parallel columns, and a dictionary, she set herself, with an industry and patience almost incredible, to find clauses and expressions that conveyed her meaning in Swedish, and then to copy their English equivalents, her letter ending, for example, "Here are many faults, but I pray you have me excused." The force of her language, however, was unmistakable, thus: "You (English) have sent missionarys round the all world, to China, Persia, Palestina, Africa, the Islands of Sandwich, to many places of the Continent of Europe; but to the great, great Siberia, where so much is to do, you not have sent missionarys. Have you not a Morrison, a Moffatt, for Siberia? Pastor Lansdell, go you yourself to Siberia!"

What, then, could I say to this? To have spoken the real language of my thoughts would have been cruel. So I thought to shelve the question by returning an oracular answer, that "the letter contained much that was interesting, and that I would think the matter over." My correspondent, however, was not to be discouraged, and wrote another letter, giving further information concerning Siberia, and drawing a gloomy picture of the religious condition of the natives and exiles. Others followed, and at last I began to think that, after all, the project was not quite so unfeasible as it first appeared to be. My generous friend, who had read the letters and was interested, both urged me on and again offered help; and when it was determined that I should leave a clerical appointment I had held

for ten easy and happy years, I resolved, in the absence of another suitable post presenting itself, at once to "rough it" for a summer in the wilds of Asiatic Russia.

But what could I do towards the object my friend had at heart? Ignorance of the Russian language and of the Siberian dialects would prevent my speaking to the people. I might, however, visit prisons, hospitals, and mines, and at least provide them with the Scriptures in various languages, and with books, as in previous holidays. When travelling in the Russian interior in 1878, persons were met with who had never seen a complete New Testament, and I reasoned that a general distribution of such books in Siberia, whether by sale or gift, would be doubly useful, besides which I meant to be on the look-out for such other opportunities of usefulness as might present themselves and be allowed me.

But what were the books you were to give away? and how is it that you were allowed to distribute them? are questions that have often been asked with surprise. An answer to the first will prepare the way for the second. The Scriptures included the four Gospels, the Book of Psalms, and the New Testament. These were for the most part in Russian; but there were a few copies in Polish, French, German, and Tatar, with certain portions of the Old Testament for the Buriats in Mongolian, and for the Jews in Hebrew. Besides these Scriptures there were copies of the *Rooski Rabotchi*, an adapted reprint in Russian of the *British Workman*, full of pictures, and well suited to the masses; also a large well-executed engraving, with the story written around, of the parable of the Prodigal Son, together with broad-sheets suitable for hospital

walls, and thousands of Russian tracts. The Scriptures were printed for the Bible Society by the Holy Synod, and the tracts had passed the censor's hands. All was therefore in order, and before going to Archangel I had received a permanent legitimation to distribute, duly endorsed by the police.

So far, therefore, things in England looked promising for Siberia, but the way thither was by no means clear. In April, 1879, the plague was said to be raging in Russia, and towards the end of that month came one of the attempts on the late Emperor's life. This led to Petersburg being placed in a state of siege, and few of my friends felicitated me on my intention to go thither. Some thought I should not obtain the required permissions for Siberia, and advised accordingly. But having always before succeeded through the courtesy of the Russians in getting what I asked, I resolved to be deaf as an adder to everything short of a denial at the capital from the lips of the authorities, and, being thus resolved, I set out on my journey.

CHAPTER II.

ACROSS EUROPE.

Departure for Petersburg.—Official receptions.—Minister of the Interior.—Metropolitan of Moscow.—Introductions.—Books forwarded.—Departure for Moscow.—Nijni Novgorod.—Site of the fair.—Joined by interpreter.—Kasan.—Bulgarian antiquities.—Neighbouring heathen.—Idolatrous objects and practices.—Departure from Kasan.—The Volga and the Kama.—Arrival at Perm.

ON Wednesday morning, 30th April, 1879, I left London, and reached Petersburg on the following Saturday evening, to find at my hotel a pleasant welcome in the shape of an invitation to breakfast with Lord Dufferin on the Monday morning. This was due to letters with which I had been favoured from high quarters in England, and one result of which, thanks to the kindness of the British Ambassador, was an introductory letter to M. Makoff, the Minister of the Interior, which I presented to his Excellency on Tuesday. Whilst waiting in the ante-room with other suitors, there was time for cogitation as to what the answer might be. My Petersburg friends gave me small hope of success; on the contrary, one of them, high in authority, who had helped me before, had gone so far as to say, "Why, it is not likely that, with so many political prisoners therein, they will allow him to go through the prisons of Siberia now." I drew encouragement, however, from the fact that a ministerial

letter had been given me the previous year, which I thought would be registered in the archives, and, trusting there was on it nothing against me, I hoped that this would be in my favour. At length, when I was ushered into the Minister's presence, he scarcely looked at the Ambassador's letter, but referred to my having had the document the previous year, and said at once that there was no objection to my having another; upon which, flushed with success, I bowed and retired.

This emboldened me to go to another dignitary, and, having a friend to interpret, I went straight from the Minister to the new Metropolitan of Moscow, to present a letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury, addressed "To the Metropolitans of the Church of Russia, or others whom it may concern." His Eminence appeared in a brown silk moiré-antique robe, glittering with jewelled decorations, and wearing as is usual the white crape hat of a metropolitan, with a diamond cross in front. He stood on little ceremony, and, almost before I had made my bow, he shook my hand, gave me a fraternal kiss on either cheek, and motioned me to a seat beside him. He then entered with zest into my scheme for distributing the Scriptures, said that the Russians had not the means to perform all they would, and commended the English for what they were doing. He asked a few questions relative to Church matters in England, regretted that we had no language in common in which we could converse, and then cordially wished me God speed.

I had thus made an excellent beginning. The next thing to be done was to get additional introductions, and this I tried to do so as to find my way amongst various classes of people. A letter from Mr. Glaisher, the

aeronaut, and formerly of the Greenwich Observatory, opened the way for me to scientific people, more especially those taking meteorological observations in European and Asiatic Russia; an introduction from a German pastor brought me into contact with the educational world through Mr. Maack, the late General-Inspector of Schools for Eastern Siberia; a third and a fourth introduction procured letters to the Finns and the German pastors throughout Siberia; and a fifth to the telegraph officers, most of whom speak English, French, or German. Messrs. Egerton Hubbard took me under their wing, and kindly arranged to forward money and letters; and I had various mercantile introductions, together with several of a social character, to persons of different standing, from the Governors-General of Siberia downwards. All told, my introductions, as far as Kiakhta, numbered 133. It is, however, a traveller's axiom that, "Of good introductions, store is no sore," and many of mine proved to be worth their weight in gold.

My Petersburg friends were delighted at the Minister's reply, and, as the sun was shining, they determined to make their hay. They urged me to take still more books—5,000 additional pamphlets of one kind, especially suited for schools; and this notwithstanding that upwards of 25,000 of a miscellaneous character had already been forwarded by slow transit to the Urals. My willingness, however, was limited only by my capabilities of carriage, and, accordingly, as many more books were taken as, together with my personal baggage and those gone before, would fill three Russian post waggons; and this I thought would be about as many as, under the circumstances, it was possible for me to take.

After a busy stay of nine days in the Russian capital, I left for Moscow on the afternoon of Monday, the 12th of May, and arrived the following morning. The only business that detained me there was to inquire of some ladies, who devote themselves to work among the prisoners, how many and what books they were distributing among the exiles, so that I might not do their work over again. I found, however, that their labours were directed more especially to the temporal good of the prisoners—looking after their wives, placing out their children, finding them clothes, and such like useful works, rather than seeking directly their spiritual good, though this had to some extent been attempted by lending and occasionally giving them books to read in the prison. Accordingly, I left Moscow by rail on Wednesday evening, to arrive after thirteen hours at Nijni Novgorod, on the Volga.

May is not a good time to see this famous place. The river overflows its banks in spring to a depth of several feet, and covers the site of the wonderful fair, in anticipation of which the lower storeys of the warehouses and buildings are cleared; and to cleanse them before July is one of the first things to be done by the owners, who with their goods arrive yearly from all parts of the world. I was rowed in a boat through the streets (which are called after the names of the merchandise sold therein) to see the Chinese quarter, with pagoda-like buildings; the Persian quarter, the two cathedrals, the theatre, the Governor's house, etc., all of which are used only during the fair, and were now empty. The nearest approach to a fair that I saw was a gathering near the entrance to the Kremlin, where were men standing with their stock-in-trade in

THE NICHOLAS GATE, MOSCOW.

Page 12.

their hands or slung over their shoulders—one with a pair of boots, another with a shirt, and a third with a pair of trousers or other garments, and for which each was ready to bargain and chaffer. Hitherto I had travelled alone. I now stayed at Nijni Novgorod to be joined by a young man who was to be my companion and interpreter, and then, leaving by steamer on Friday at mid-day, we reached Kasan early on Saturday morning, there to spend Sunday, the 18th of May.

The covered heads and veiled faces of the women, together with the tawny porters carrying their huge burdens, speedily reminded us that we had reached an ancient Tatar city. The only tourists' lion we visited was Mr. Lichatcheff's collection of Bulgarian antiquities. He very kindly and politely showed us through the rooms of his house, which were crammed with curiosities. Among them were rude implements of the stone age, ancient oriental lamps, and ancient crosses, one of which, dating from the eleventh or twelfth century, was without the foot-piece now found on the Russian cross, which foot-piece, our informant considered, was not used on Russian crosses in the earliest times. There were also some stone Byzantine crosses. The Bulgarian antiquities had been found on the banks of the Volga, showing the location of that people before their migration further south.

Another point of interest in Kasan must not be passed over. I had supposed that heathen rites and practices were now in Europe a thing of the past. We heard, however, of five nationalities scattered through Russia, but found more, especially in the Kasan government, who, though nominally Christian,

still resort to idolatrous superstitions. They are called Tcheremisi, Mordvar, Vodeki, Tchuvashi, and Tatars; and the Russian Government is adopting means for their enlightenment by taking peasant boys from among them, and training them for schoolmasters and priests. A seminary devoted to this purpose, situated near the Tatar quarter of the town, was shown to us by the principal, Professor Ilminski.*

In or near the Bishop's house in the Kremlin we were introduced to Mr. Zoloneetski, who trains young men to be mission priests to the nationalities whence they have been brought. In 1878 he had twenty-one students, some of them from the seminary just mentioned. He gives them lectures on aboriginal languages, customs, and superstitions, and shows them how to bring the natives to Christianity. This he does in part by exposing various idolatrous objects, of which he has a curious collection. Among them was a Tchuvash idol, consisting of a block of wood, to which pieces of cloth were brought as offerings. This had been used less than ten years before. Another piece of superstition came from the Tcheremisi,† and was less than

* The Government provides support for 150 scholars, half of whom are Russians, and the remaining half are from the five nationalities already mentioned. They have no difficulty in procuring the requisite number of scholars. Such as can say their small Russian catechism intelligently are received, and kept for three years as pupil-teachers, at the expiration of which time they serve the Government for six years by way of return for their education, and receive salaries of from twelve to thirty pounds a year. A New Testament, we found (but not the Bible), is provided for each youth in the higher classes.

† Their worship was thus described: The priest takes in one hand a piece of burning wood, and in the other a branch (such as we saw, and on which the leaves were still green, though dry), and then walks in a circle, the area of which is thus, for the time being, consecrated for worship. Then he fastens round a tree a withe, and sticks therein a branch with

twelve months old. There was also to be seen a rudely-cut box containing coins. Some of them were ancient, but were supposed to have been offered recently by Tatars, nominally Christian. It would seem that a Tatar sometimes makes a vow to the spirit of the forest to dedicate a horse, cow, or some other animal; but not having a victim, or not having it to spare at the time, he leaves money as a pledge of good faith, and then, when able to fulfil his vow, reclaims his coin.

Some of these objects had been obtained through friends and some by fraud, but there was a curious story connected with the boxes. A missionary priest (a friend of our informant), knowing of their existence, went to a family in his parish, and asked if he might take away their idolatrous things. They answered at first in the negative; but, after he had left the house, a woman came out to draw water, and told him she thought it would be much better if he would *steal* the things, for then they would have less money to bring and fewer prayers to say. The priest, therefore, returned at night, when the family pretended to be soundly asleep (so that the spirit might not be offended with what took place whilst they were unconscious), mounted the loft, took the things, and subsequently gave them to our informant.

the bark peeled something like a whip, which is supposed to represent a fir-tree; on this is hung a piece of lead, previously melted, poured into cold water, and molten so as to form roughly the figure of a head, which is called an *eeta*. Towards this they afterwards say their prayers. The priest kills the victim, which may be a horse, a cow, a chicken, a duck, etc., and sprinkles the blood on the tree and the withe. (The blood was yet visible on the one we saw.) Then they proceed to peel or chip pieces of wood, making them fly off in the direction of the tree; and according as the chips fall, with the bark or the white side upwards, so they divine an answer to their prayer. The branch we saw was brought away by a friend of our informant just after the offering.

We quitted Kasan on Monday morning in one of Lubimoff's steamers, and, after proceeding two or three hours down the Volga, left that river to finish its career of 2,200 miles, whilst we turned into one of its affluents, the Kama, which is no mean river in itself, having a course of 1,400 miles. The junction of the two streams presents a fine expanse of water, but the banks are too flat to be pretty. Steamboat travelling in Russia is not expensive, the first-class fare from Nijni Novgorod to Perm, a four days' journey, being only 36*s.*

After a voyage of three days and a half from Kasan we reached Perm, where the people were in great excitement consequent on the burning of two "quartals," or large blocks of buildings. The roofs and houses of the town were described as being covered, during the previous night, with women, watching lest sparks should fall on their property, whilst their husbands helped to extinguish the fire; and so great was the fear of a general conflagration, that some sent their wives and families into the neighbouring villages. Others we saw encamped by the bank of the river, whilst on a grass plot near a church were others tired out and fast asleep beside the chattels they had rescued. Not long before, Orenburg and Irbit had been burnt, and were supposed by some to have been wilfully set on fire, and so excited were the inhabitants of Perm, and so ready to snap up persons at all suspected, that we were cautioned, as being strangers, to walk in the middle of the road. We then visited the hospital, saw the Governor, and left some books for the Perm institutions; but I was reserving my strength for Siberia, and the same evening the train was to carry us to the top of the Urals.

CHAPTER III

THE URALS TO TIUMEN.

A new railway.—The Ural range.—Outlook into Russia in Asia.—Nijni Tagil.—The Demidoff mines and hospital.—May weather.—Russian railways.—Arrival at Ekaterineburg.—An orphanage.—Precious stones.—Orenburg shawls.—Tarantass and luggage.—Departure for Tiumen.—The exiles.—Visits to the authorities.

THOSE who have hitherto written of journeys to Siberia have told of a dismal drive from Perm to Ekaterineburg; but this misfortune did not fall to our lot, since in the autumn of 1878 a railway was opened over the mountains, and the journey is now accomplished in about four-and-twenty hours. The distance is 312 miles, and between the two termini are about 30 stations.*

From the prominence given in maps of Europe to the Ural chain, one is apt from childhood to expect in these mountains something grand. The entire length of the range, including its continuation in Novaia

* Of the three divisions, the Northern or barren Ural, as the Russians call it, beginning at the source of the Pechora, is the most elevated and the least known. The Southern Ural begins about midway between Perm and Orenburg, and descends to the banks of the Ural river. It is a pastoral country, and about 100 miles in width. The range is here less than 3,000 feet in height. The central Ural may be considered as a wide undulation, beginning on the west on the banks of the Kama. Perm, situated on the right bank of the river, is 378 feet above the sea level, and on the post road to Ekaterineburg the highest point is 1,638 feet, which, if my reckoning is correct, is 40 feet less than the highest station on the railway.

Zemlia, is about 1,700 miles. Its highest peak, however, does not attain to more than 6,000 feet, and many parts of the range are not more than 2,000 feet above the sea level. No part of it is permanently covered with snow. Travellers by the old route describe, in passing it, a never-failing object of interest on the frontier in the shape of a stone, on one side of which is written "Europe" and on the other "Asia,' across which, of course, an English boy would stride, and announce that he had stood in two quarters of the globe at once. Travellers by the new route miss this opportunity; but they have its equivalent in three border stations, one of which is called "*Europa*," the next "*Ural*," and the third "*Asia*," through which those who have journeyed can say what no other travellers can, that they have passed by rail from one quarter of the globe into another.

Thus the ease with which one reaches the summit of the Urals is somewhat disappointing, but no such thoughts are suggested by an outlook into the immense country that now lies before the traveller. There stretches far before him a region known as Russia in Asia, the dimensions of which are very hard for the mind to realize. It measures 4,000 miles from east to west, about 2,000 from north to south, and covers

I set my aneroid at Perm, and found that at the fourth station, Seleenka, a distance of 172 miles, we had mounted 470 feet; the next 22 miles brought us down again to 120 feet, after which for 60 miles we continued to ascend to Bisir, which registered 1,300 feet above Perm, and was the highest station on the road. Level ground succeeded for about 30 miles to the border station, after which in 50 miles we descended 750 feet to Shaitanka, 10 miles beyond which we had remounted 200 feet; and on this level we kept to Iset, the last station but one. The road then descended about 150 feet to Ekaterineburg, which is said to be 858 feet above the sea level.

nearly five and three-quarter millions of square miles. It is larger by two millions of square miles than the whole of Europe; about twice as big as Australia, and nearly one hundred times as large as England.

The general aspect of the surface may be easily described. The Altai range of mountains, with its offshoots to the east, forms the general features of the southern boundary, and from these heights the land gradually slopes towards the northern *tundras* or bogs, which extend to the frozen ocean. The country is intersected by three of the largest rivers in the world, the Obi, the Yenesei, and the Lena, not one of which is much less than 3,000 miles long, and all of them, through great part of the year, flow under masses of ice to the Arctic Ocean. A fourth river, the Amur, rising in the Yablonoi mountains, which may be regarded as a part of the eastern slopes of the Altai chain, runs a course also of more than 2,000 miles, but takes an easterly direction, forming part of the southern boundary of the country, and empties itself into the Gulf of Tartary.

The country largely consists of immense steppes marshes, and pools. Lakes, properly so called, are not numerous, but the greatest of them, the "Baikal," is in some respects the most remarkable in the world. No less remarkable is the great variety of the inhabitants. They are sometimes classified into five typical races: *Sclavonic* (including Russians and Poles); *Finnish* (including Finns, Voguls, Ostjaks, Samoyedes, Yuraki); *Turkish* (including Tatars, Kirghese, Kalmuks, Yakutes); *Mongolian* (including Manchu, Buriats, and Tunguses —the last of various denominations); and *Chinese,* with whom may be classed, though not very accurately, the

Gilyaks and Ainos. In fact, an ethnographical map of Asiatic Russia I bought at Petersburg shows therein no less than 30 peoples or nations.*

Many of them, it is true, are but feebly represented, for the entire population does not number more inhabitants than are to be found in seven of the counties of England, and they have not enough men and women in Russian Asia to put one of each in every square mile, whereas every square mile of the seven English counties alluded to has on an average 573 inhabitants. It is difficult to give exact statistics, because, from the wandering life led by many of the aborigines, it is impossible to ascertain their number, and so authorities differ; but the total population, including Russians, is estimated at about 8,000,000. Our attention, however, is to be chiefly confined to Siberia, and it should not be forgotten that Siberia is not co-extensive with the whole of Asiatic Russia, and does not begin, properly speaking, till Ekaterineburg is passed. We have been merely taking a look, from the government of Perm, out of European into Asiatic Russia; this government, as also that of Orenburg, lying partly in Europe and partly in Asia.

Before descending to the foot of the Urals, we arrive at Nijni Tagilsk. At this place we halted for a day to

1. Slavs.
2. Zeryani.
3. Voguls.
4. Votyaks.
5. Tatars.
6. Kirghese of little horde.
7. Kirghese of middle horde.
8. Kirghese of great horde.
9. Buruti Kirghese.
10. Karakalpaks.
11. Sarti.
12. Uzbeki.
13. Turks.
14. Altai Kalmuks.
15. Teleuti.
16. Ostjaks.
17. Samoyedes.
18. Yuraki.
19. Yakutes.
20. Tunguse.
21. Goldi.
22. Gilyaks.
23. Yukagirs.
24. Chukchees.
25. Koriaks.
26. Kamchadales.
27. Ainos.
28. Buriats.
29. Manchu.
30. Chinese.

look over the famous Demidoff mines and works. There had been a fire in the town, as at Perm, on the night preceding our arrival; and in seven hours 78 houses had been burnt. Pieces of smoking wood were still flying about. The common people, as before, attributed the fire to incendiaries, such as escaped prisoners, who hoped to profit by the turmoil, and find an occasion for plunder; but more thoughtful people traced it to accidental causes. Demidoff's workmen had been called out at night to assist as firemen, and were in consequence resting. We could not, therefore, see everything in motion, but enough was visible to make it clear that they were carrying on enormous metallurgical operations. One of the remarkable things to be noticed was a surface mine of magnetic iron ore, blasted and dug out in terraces, carted down by horses and taken to the furnace, where the ore proves so rich that it yields 68 per cent. of iron. We also descended a copper-mine, the mineral from which yields 5 per cent. of metal. We were dressed for the occasion in top-boots, leather hats, and appropriate blouses and trousers, each carrying a lamp, and thus by ladders we descended one shaft of 600 feet and came up another, the water meanwhile trickling upon us freely. At the bottom of the mine they were erecting an English machine for pumping 80 cubic feet of water per minute to the surface. In the engine-room two men at a time spend eight hours daily, for which they each receive in money about fifteen pence. We promised ourselves, as a great feature in the descent of the copper-mine, the seeing of malachite in its natural state, and we were not disappointed. The captain took us through

long galleries of timber beams, and then to the spots where the miners had been working. Here, by the light of our lamps, the pieces of green mineral could be clearly seen, and we had the pleasure of digging them out with a pick, and bringing them away as specimens. The price of malachite at the mine is six shillings a Russian pound, if in moderate-sized pieces; twenty shillings when the lumps are large, but only two shillings if they are small.

Besides these copper and magnetic iron mines, they have others of manganese iron ore, which contains 64 per cent. of binoxide of manganese, the peroxide being sold at the rate of about eighteen shillings per hundredweight. Specimens of these and other minerals of great interest to the geologist are exhibited in a museum not far from the works.

Among the remarkable things to be seen at these hives of industry were—a machine for drawing water by a cord from a copper-mine two miles off, a steam-hammer of seven tons weight, an iron furnace of 10,000 cubic feet dimensions, said to be the largest high furnace for *wood* in the world, and a machine for splitting their fuel wood, of which they burn annually 100,000 *sajens*—that is to say, a 325 feet cube, or, roughly speaking, a pile of logs twice as big as St. Paul's Cathedral.*

They make steel for Sheffield, and can do castings up to more than 30 tons in weight. Their iron is excelled in quality, I believe, only by that of Danne-

* What extent of land must be cleared to furnish such a quantity of fuel I know not, but the railways of Central Russia are said to consume yearly the timber off 90,000 acres of forest—an area, that is, about the size of Rutlandshire.

mora. They have 11 *zavods*, or "works," of which eight are connected with iron. But perhaps a better idea can be formed of their vastness by the mention of the number of persons employed, which amounts to 30,000. I heard also 40,000, and both numbers were from heads of departments; but probably the latter estimate includes carters, labourers, and perhaps even women. The Demidoffs pay annually, by way of rates and taxes—to the Commune, £5,000; the Church, £1,500; schools, £2,500; poor and aged, £3,000; together with other sums, amounting in all to about £20,000 a year. Wages, as compared with those in England, appeared low. Common workmen receive from 7½*d.* to 1*s.* a day, puddlers 3*s.*, and those in the welding furnace 4*s.*, whilst good rollers receive from 3*s.* 6*d.* to 6*s.* It should be observed, however, that they all have houses rent free, with the piece of land they formerly occupied as serfs.

Before the emancipation, the riches of the Demidoffs were counted in the phrase then usual in Russia as amounting to 56,000 souls.* A small church, built on the crest of a neighbouring hill, was pointed out as having been built by the serfs in memory of their freedom; and I was glad to hear from the director, Mr. Wohlstadt (by whom we were courteously entertained), that since the emancipation the men work better and better, knowing, I presume, when serfs, that idleness would be repaid with something not much worse than

* That is, men, or at least *males;* for I am told that male children are called "souls," but female children never. An English lady of my acquaintance informs me that she was told scores of times in Russia that she was not a *doash*, or soul, but only a woman; and when her son was born she was congratulated on being the mother of a soul!

a beating; whereas now they know they may be discharged.

We slept at the club; and in the morning, before leaving, visited the Demidoff hospital, upon which, and upon institutions of a similar kind, the proprietors spend nearly £4,000 a year. The dimensions of the rooms were such as to allow of three cubic *sajens*, or 1,200 cubic feet, of air for each of the patients, of whom there were 120 at the time of our visit. Many fractured and amputated limbs were seen dressed with gypsum, alcohol, and camphor; but the most extraordinary thing was a machine in the director's private room, in which he placed frozen human brains, and for scientific purposes cut them in very thin slices to photograph. The photographs are to be purchased in Paris.

On leaving Tagil we found the temperature much colder,* and our journey to Ekaterineburg was somewhat comfortless, from the fact that, anticipating no more cold weather, the officials had not brought in the train the apparatus for heating by steam. At Ekaterineburg I finished railway journeys, amounting to 2,670 miles; and as I was now to bid farewell to the horse of iron and travel by horses of flesh, it is only right to say that of the iron horses which took me across Europe

* Concerning the weather in crossing Europe, I may say that, from the Russian frontier to the capital, on the 2nd and 3rd of May, a fire was provided in the railway carriage, and on approaching Petersburg there was just a little snow left here and there in drifts. On the 4th the last of the ice was floating down the Neva. In less than a week it became positively hot in the middle of the day, and the trees opened their foliage rapidly. At Nijni Novgorod, on the 15th, the foliage was all but full. On the banks of the Kama the trees were covered with leaves, which the captain of the steamer said had come out within the previous five days; and on the 20th, when stopping for wood, some of the passengers found strawberry blossoms and violets. Fine weather then continued up to the 23rd.

the Russian on the whole was, I think, the best.* Our arrival at Ekaterineburg on Saturday evening was expected, and quarters were provided for me through the kindness of Messrs. Egerton Hubbard. Ekaterineburg is a handsome town of 30,000 inhabitants, and has many fine churches and other buildings. On Sunday I visited the hospital, and also an orphanage for 100 children, which has been built and is supported by local voluntary effort. This kind of institution is not yet very common among the Russians. It was regarded as a novelty, and was the only one of its precise kind that we saw in Asia.

Formerly there were several Englishmen living at Ekaterineburg, but a few only are now left, and so little practice do they have in the tongue of their fathers that some of them are rapidly forgetting it. Instances of this were met with further east, and another case in which English parents were allowing their children to grow up speaking only Russian, the result of which would be that the son who had been sent for his education to England would forget Russian, and, on coming back to Siberia, would not be able to speak to his sister who had not learnt English.

* The new first-class carriages running between Petersburg and Moscow have *fauteuils*, which form couches at night; and one I saw was so fixed on springs as to furnish almost the softness of a feather-bed. They have also writing tables, and are more luxurious than anything I have seen elsewhere in Europe, or even America. The lavatory arrangements "on board" in all three classes are exceedingly good. There only lacks the receptacle for iced water provided in Norway, and, perhaps, the dining cars run in America, to make Russian railway accommodation perfect. The guards, it is true, are somewhat pompous as compared with the English, and the speed of the trains is slower; but, on the other hand, the refreshments are very much better, and the prices more reasonable. There is time allowed, moreover, to eat them, though I am thinking more especially of the line between the capital and Moscow, which is naturally one of the best.

Ekaterineburg is a famous place for the cutting of precious stones, in which Siberia is rich. Near the river Argun are found the jacinth, the Siberian emerald, the onyx, and beautiful jaspers, of which there are at least a hundred varieties. Near Lake Baikal are found red garnets and lapis lazuli, and the Altai mountains furnish the opal. Several of these are also found near Ekaterineburg, together with the beryl, the topaz, the chrysolite, the aqua marine, the tourmaline, rhodonite, nephrite, ophite, selenite, and the recently-discovered Alexandrite, which exhibits two colors—crimson and green—the one by day and the other by night. The stone derives its name from the Emperor Alexander, whose colours it shows. These stones are cut in the Government workshops and in private houses, and may be purchased at moderate prices.

South of Ekaterineburg, towards Orenburg, are villages where may be purchased uncommon souvenirs in the shape of gentlemen's scarves and gloves, together with *kozy pookh*, or, as they are more commonly called, Orenburg shawls. They are made from the wool of the goats of the Kirghese, who allow the Cossacks to comb their flocks at the rate of from eightpence to a shilling per head. Twice a year the goats are washed and combed, first with a coarse and then with a fine comb. To make a good shawl employs a woman six months, and then, if it be a large one, it sells at first hand for about fifty shillings; but very much higher prices are asked in Petersburg.

We stayed three days at Ekaterineburg to lay in provisions and gather our forces for proceeding by horses. The greater part of my heavy luggage had

been dispatched by slow train to Ekaterineburg fully a month before me, but it did not reach its destination till the day after my arrival. The agent said it might have been waiting on the road for the chance of other goods to make up a load. A tarantass had been very kindly placed at my disposal by Mr. Oswald Cattley, whose name, some time since, was before the public in connection with the opening up of a new trade on the Obi; and in this we packed ourselves and some of our personal baggage, placing the rest with several boxes in a second conveyance, and leaving still a third load of boxes to be forwarded as luggage. In this fashion, after receiving all sorts of kindness and hospitality from our English friends, we started on Tuesday evening, May 27th, for Tiumen, a distance of 204 miles, which was accomplished in 43 continuous hours.

Tiumen is situated on the Tura, and has a population of from 15,000 to 20,000 inhabitants. Commercially speaking, it is the most important town in Western Siberia, and through it pass the water carriage of the Obi, as well as the caravans coming from China and the East. Here we found an English engineering firm, conducted by Messrs. Wardropper, who were particularly kind to us. To Tiumen all the exiles are brought from Europe, and from thence are distributed over Siberia. I needed not, therefore, the eye of a general to see that, for my purpose of distributing books over the land, this was the key to a very important position. It was desirable, therefore, that I should see some of the magnates of the town who were members of the prison committee, and, if possible, secure their sympathy and co-operation.

Accordingly I was taken to visit the Mayor, who

was building a large commercial school for the benefit of the town, at a cost of more than £20,000, which, when finished, was to be handed over to the Government. He is a merchant who has made his way to the front, and now entertains the Governor-General when he passes through, though otherwise he lives quietly. His house, when we called, was in preparation for one of those viceregal receptions, and, knowing that his worship was rich, I busied myself, during the Russian conversation, in scanning what I supposed might be considered appropriate study furniture for a wealthy Siberian. The Mayor, I had heard, was fond of good horses, which accounted for the winner-of-the-Derby-like engravings hanging on the wall, the whole of which might have been purchased, I judged, in London for twenty shillings. The room, as is the custom of the country, was not carpeted, and the furniture consisted of a bare, polished, wooden bench, bored with holes, in patterns after the fashion of American street cars. The chairs were of wood, similarly ornamented. The table had about it some fretwork, and on it various writing materials, and accompaniments more or less artistic. I mentally appraised the whole as being worth about £20, and admired the simplicity of a man who could be content with a study thus furnished, whilst he was giving away a thousand times its value. My cogitations served to recall what had struck me in Norway and Sweden, when observing how much simpler, as regards furniture, people are content to live in these northern countries than in England, though I did not discern that they were less happy than we are. After leaving the house, I broached the subject approvingly to my friend who was with me,

upon which I found that I had undervalued the furniture, and that it was of American manufacture, and the first of the kind imported into the town.

I was taken also to call upon a prominent member of the prison committee, Mr. Ignatoff, of the firm of Kourbatoff and Ignatoff. They have steamers on the Kama and Obi, and hold the Government contract for the transport in barges of exiles. He was much interested in my scheme of visiting prisons, and was so pleased with my account of the Howard Association in London, of which I said I was a member, and which had for its object the prevention of crime and promoting the best methods for the treatment and reformation of prisoners, that he spoke of asking to be allowed at once to join the Association.* He kindly undertook to do all he could to further the distribution of the books I engaged to send to him; and I was glad to have called, not only for the information obtained, but for the interest excited, though I was hardly prepared for the very practical and generous form which this interest took, which will be hereafter alluded to.

We called afterwards on the Ispravnik, or chief

* He had made private notes concerning the exiles, of which it appeared that, during the last ten years, from 9,500 to 10,500 yearly had passed through his hands. Of these there were adults about 9,000; under 15, 1,500; and under 2 years of age, 150. About 3,000, he thought, could read. The professors of various religious beliefs prevailed, he said in decreasing numbers, in the following order: (1) Orthodox Russian, (2) Mohammedan, (3) Jewish, (4) Roman Catholic, (5) Protestant. Drunkenness, he believed, was directly or indirectly the cause of the crimes of half of the whole number sent to Siberia, and these were found to be the worst prisoners and the most troublesome. He looked forward, therefore, with pleasure to the expected and now long-waited-for prison reforms, one of which, it was said, would be the sending no more exiles to the western part of Siberia.

man of the district, and presented my letter, with the view of visiting the prisons. I heard that in his district there were 24 schools, and, having made arrangements for providing them with tracts, I went to see the prison. From statistics given me for the previous year, it appeared that a total of 20,711 prisoners passed through the hands of the authorities in 1878.* This opens up the whole subject of prisons and exiles, which is to form a leading feature of these pages, and therefore I think it will be better to devote separate chapters to both, in which general ideas can be given. This will save repetition, and it will then be easy to illustrate general principles by particular incidents as we meet them from time to time in travelling and visiting prisons from the Urals to the Pacific.

* One-fourth of these (4,995) were women, and 215 were *local* offenders, of whom 10 were women and 3 were minors. In the course of the year were located in the Town Prison 157 men and 5 women; in the Police Prison 4 men, and in the Central Prison for exiles 15,111 men and 4,985 women.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXILES.

Reasons for and history of deportation to Siberia.—Number of exiles.—Their education.—Crimes.—Sentences.—Loss of rights.—Privileges.—Proportion of hard-labour convicts.—Where located.—Release.—Escapes.—Causes and methods of flight.—Transport.—A convoy of exiles.—Moscow charity.—Conveyance to Perm and Tiumen.—Their distribution.—Order of march.—Sea-borne exiles.—Mistakes of English newspapers.—Conveyance of political exiles.

IN dealing with criminals, the Russian Government has to act as best it can for the good of the community in general. If, in particular cases, it seems likely that the criminal may be reformed, he is sent to one of the prisons or houses of correction at home; but if, on the other hand, the crime of the malefactor demands a severe punishment, and, after repeated correction, he seems to be incorrigible, then he is banished to Siberia, the people being thus rid of a corrupting member of society, whilst another unit is sent to assist in developing the resources of a large territory of the Russian empire, which has great need of population. This, I presume, is the theory, or part of it, of the deportation of prisoners to distant parts of the empire.*

* According to M. Reclus, the first decree of banishment fell upon the insurrectionists of Uglitch, in 1591, in the days of the Tsar Boris Godunof, and for a century afterwards Siberia received scarcely any exiles but State prisoners. At the end of the seventeenth century, however, some of the

The number of ordinary exiles sent to Siberia for several years past has been from 17,000 to 20,000 per annum; but this includes wives and children who choose to accompany the prisoners. Of these nearly 8,000, on their arrival in Siberia, are set free to get their own living; about 3,000 of them being sent to Eastern and 5,000 to Western Siberia. The exiles come from all parts of Russia in Europe, and include about 300 a year from Finland. In 1879 there were 898 sent from Poland. Some idea may be formed of the education of the exiles from the fact that on the day we visited Tiumen prison there were, out of 470 prisoners, 42 who could read and write well, 32 who could do so a little, and 12 who could sign their names. At Tiumen, however, we heard from one who had to do with a great many exiles, and who had several statistics about them, that one-third of those with whom he had been brought into contact could read. Again, in the district of Kansk, in Eastern Siberia, in 1877, of 226 criminals, only two were marked as "well-educated," whilst in 1878, of 182 prisoners, none stood

vanquished Little Russians of the Ukraine were deported thither; and they were followed by the religious dissenters—the first accompanied by their families. The Streltzi were banished by Peter the Great to garrisons in the most distant parts of the empire; and after the reign of Peter, the intrigues of the palace were the cause of exile to some of the Court celebrities, such as Menchikoff, Dolgoruki, Biron, Munich, Tolstoï, and others, some of whom, however, were brought back when their friends came into favour. In 1758 began the deportation of Poles to Siberia, but their banishment in large numbers dates from the reign of Catherine II., with the confederates of Bar, and then with the companions of Kosciuzko. Nine hundred Poles, having served under Napoleon, were exiled to Siberia, and large numbers of the insurrectionists of 1830 followed. The exiles whose names awaken perhaps the most sympathy among the Russians were the Decembrists of 1826, who endeavoured to deprive the Emperor Nicholas of his throne; but of these, and political prisoners generally, I shall treat hereafter in a separate chapter.

high enough, intellectually, to be thus designated. The figures from Kansk are not quite to the point in speaking of European Russia, but they help, with others, to give an approximate idea, not only of the education, but also of the social rank of the Siberian criminals. Again, for statistical purposes, the Russians are sometimes marked off into five classes, thus: nobles, merchants, ecclesiastics, citizens, and peasants; and in prison the higher grades receive better allowance, and are not mixed with the peasant prisoners, but have rooms apart. In going through the principal prisons of Siberia, however, we found the number of rooms thus occupied decidedly small; so that this observation, taken with the educational state of the prisoners, would seem to confirm what I was told by one prison official, that probably not more than 3 or 4 per cent. of the exiles are from the upper classes.

As to the crimes of the exiles, they are not all political, nor even chiefly so. A large proportion—4,000 out of 18,000, or say 20 per cent.—of them are charged with no one particular offence, except that they have rendered themselves obnoxious to the community among which they lived. If a man in Russia be incorrigibly bad, and will not pay his taxes nor support his wife and family, but leaves these things to be done by his neighbours, his commune—which may consist of one or more villages—meet in their *mir*, or village parliament, vote the man a nuisance, and adjudge that he be sent, at their expense, to Siberia. This judgment is submitted to higher authorities, and, unless just cause be shown to the contrary, is confirmed. The man is then taken to Siberia, not to be imprisoned, but to get his living as a colonist.

Those sent thus by the villages, I was told, are chiefly drunkards. We saw a whole wardful of them at Tiumen, dressed in private clothes, and not in prison garb; and a second ward, of a similar mixed multitude, consisting of men, women, and children. The perpetrators of political crimes, as those of the "black Nihilists," are, when caught, usually accommodated with free lodgings in Siberia; and so with revolutionary offenders, who make insurrection in Poland, Circassia, or elsewhere. Of offenders such as these I must speak hereafter. Formerly religious dissenters were largely deported, but this has not been done since the proclamation of what may, in a fashion, be called religious liberty, unless in the case of one or two—more especially one sect—whose practices no enlightened Government could tolerate, and which are so extraordinary that, if they obtained universal acceptance, there would be no further increase of population, and the human race would become extinct. The fact is that the great mass of exiles are nothing more nor less than ordinary criminals, such as may be found in any of the prisons of Europe.*

* There are upwards of thirty crimes for the commission of one or more of which a man may be sent to Siberia. In fact, I have been told that all the crimes of the country are reduced to these thirty-three heads, viz.: insubordination to authorities; stealing or losing official documents; escape, or abetting the escape, of prisoners; embezzlement of Government property; forgery while in Government employ; blasphemy; heresy and dissent; sacrilege; sheltering runaways; forging coin or paper money; without passport, or passport with term not renewed; vagrancy; bad conduct and petty crimes; murder, and suspicion thereof; attempted suicide; wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm; rape and seduction; insult; attacking with intent to wound; holding property falsely; practices of the "Scoptsi"; arson; robbery and burglary; thieving and roguery; horse-stealing; dishonesty and false actions; debt; dishonouring the name of the Emperor; assuming false names or titles; bestiality; usury and extortion; eluding military service; smuggling and illicit distilling.

The sentences of the exiles vary widely according as they are condemned to one or the other of two classes, namely: those who lose all their rights, and those who lose only partial or political rights, which deprivations may be thus explained :—

Those who lose all their rights are not in an enviable position. These are some of the things they lose :—If a man have a title or official rank, he is degraded. An exile's marriage rights are broken, so that his wife is free to marry another. Neither his word nor his bond is of any value. He cannot sign a legal document or serve any office, either municipal or imperial. He can hold no property, nor do anything legal in his own name. In prison he must wear convict's clothes, and have his head half shaved ; and, in the case of a woman, she cannot marry after her release from prison till by good conduct she has placed herself in a certain category; and, whether man or woman, they may, for new crimes, if the authorities see fit, after they have served their time in prison, and are living as colonists, be sent back again. They may be thrashed with rods and with the "*plète*," and, even should they be murdered, probably little trouble would be taken to find the murderer. In fact, as the words imply, they lose all their rights, though I believe they can appeal to the law in case of being grossly wronged.

I have said that an exile's marriage rights are broken, and I was told that it is the same with convicts in America. Were it not so, it might be very hard upon a young wife whose husband, for instance, had committed murder, and who, for her husband's crime and banishment, should be compelled to remain single for the rest of her life. A Russian wife with

her children, however, may accompany the husband if she chooses ; in which case they go with the exile and receive from the Government prison food and accommodation. If, on the other hand, a husband wishes to accompany a convict wife, he travels at his own cost. To the honour of the Russian women be it said that the proportion of men accompanied by their wives and families is one in every six. The proportion of women accompanied by their husbands is, I am told, not exactly known, though it is very much less.

Those who suffer the loss of particular rights lose certain of their privileges (but not family or property rights), and are settled in Siberia, to get their living in any way they are able. They may, however, in some cases, have first to serve for a period in prison; or, again, they may be allowed to live in their own houses and give a portion of their time to Government work.

Commonly, they are condemned first to serve a certain time in confinement, with or without labour. If they behave well they are, after a while, and in some cases, allowed to live outside the prison with their families, if they have any, but still to do their allotted work, until the period arrives for them to be liberated and located like colonists. Some of the women who are condemned to the far east have the good fortune to be taken as domestic servants by officers, and even favoured civilians, who, in a new country where ordinary servants are not to be had, are allowed for this purpose to take the prisoners, subject to inspection, of course. Lastly, some exiles, though comparatively few, I believe, are condemned to prison, or to prison and labour, for life.*

* Some idea may be formed of the proportion of the banished who

The localities to which the exiles are sent vary according to their crimes. Speaking generally, those deprived of partial rights are sent to Western, and those deprived of all their rights to Eastern, Siberia. On this point I have no official statistics, but a legal officer gave me these particulars concerning the location of convicts. Murderers are sent to Kara. My finding 800 there would seem to confirm this, only that their presence was manifest in so many of the other prisons also. Political prisoners go to Kara, to the Trans-Baikal district, and (as I heard from other sources) to the Yakutsk government; also to this latter province are sent those who commit fresh crimes in Siberia. Vagrants or vagabonds are dispatched to the far east, to the government of the Sea Coast and Sakhalin. On the other hand, Western Siberia would seem to be reserved for minor offenders, and those deprived of certain particular rights only. It should be observed, however, that exiles, wherever they may be, are under police inspection, are furnished with papers

are condemned to hard labour by observing that, of 17,867 exiles passing eastwards through Tiumen prison in 1878 (the year before my visit), 2,252, or one-seventh, were transported for hard labour, and the remainder for "residence for life, or for certain terms in East and West Siberia." I was told likewise by Mr. Ignatoff, at Tiumen, that about 2,500 hard-labour convicts passed yearly through his hands, and that they spent the first part of their time at Tobolsk. It may be further noticed from my statistics, that during the same year which saw the above number of exiles going eastwards, there passed through the same prison 2,629 persons returning westwards "to their respective homes in Russia;" which expression I do not understand, since I am informed from an official source that the number of persons returning after temporary exile is very small. The law permits those only to go back who are banished by the communes (and then not without their permission), and those who are deprived of *particular* rights. Four hundred and sixty-two of those condemned to "hard labour," and 3,488 of those going into "residence," are marked as *minors*,—that is to say, children of exiles, and *offenders* under twenty-one years of age; of which last, I am told, the annual total sent to Siberia does not exceed 300.

which they have to show at intervals, and which tie them to a certain place, whence they can move to a distance only by permission. When at large, and in some cases when in prison, the exiles may correspond with their friends through the post; but the letters must of course be read by the authorities. The hardest part of the lot of those who lose all their rights seems to be that they cannot look forward to the hope of returning. Not that a release is *never* granted even to these; for I am told that political offenders are sometimes seen hurried out of, as fast as they are hurried into, exile. The late Emperor, too, when he came to the throne, began his reign by an act of clemency on a larger scale, and allowed certain exiles whom his father had banished to return. Again, I have heard of a Polish exile in good circumstances who was fortunate enough to win the love of an English young lady connected (by name at all events) with one of the ducal families of Great Britain, through which it is said the ear was gained of a member first of the English royal family, then of the imperial family of Russia, and finally of the Emperor himself.* I have met with another case of a released exile who was liberated under curious circumstances. He gave me his story thus:—When Alexander II. visited Paris in the time of Napoleon III.,

* I have heard parts of this story in various places—in Hampshire, in Devon, in Siberia, and on the coast of the Pacific—of the heroic conduct of a Scotch Professor, who gallantly escorted this young lady to her lover in Siberia, sat by her side for 3,000 miles, watched over her, saw her married, and then, returning, gave no rest to friends or officials till he had obtained the Pole's release. The incidents would doubtless suffice for a three-volumed novel, which, however, I will not begin, as I know only one of the parties concerned, and him only by correspondence, and I have not had the recital from his own lips.

the Tsar asked the Emperor if there were anything he could do for him. Upon which the Emperor replied: "You have a Frenchman who, in young and silly days, joined the Polish insurrection. He was made prisoner, and is now in Siberia. Will you do me the favour to release him?" The request was granted, a messenger despatched, the happy prisoner in forty-five days and nights drove back from the mines to Moscow, not with a couple of horses merely, but troika fashion, between a couple of gendarmes, and received his pardon. But such cases, of course, are rare.

It is well known that many of the exiles escape—some from the prisons, and others from the districts where they are living free. A Russian authoress, "O. K.," in "Russia and England from 1876 to 1880," says that in January 1876, out of 51,122 exiles supposed to be in Tobolsk, only 34,293 could be found, which figures an Englishman living in the Tobolsk government (speaking offhand) told me he should doubt, though he thought "O. K.'s" statement *might* be right regarding the government of Tomsk, in which the same authoress states that 5,000 were missing out of 30,000. For my own figures I am indebted to a prison official very high in position, who told me that nearly 700 get away yearly, and in 1876 as many as 952 escaped the control of the police. Thus the mere feat of running away does not seem to be difficult; but this does not imply that it is equally easy to get away from the country. A few roubles slipped into the hands of a Cossack or petty officer have a wonderful effect in blinding his eyes. Again, an escape is sometimes made from the gold-mines thus:—The convicts work in gangs, and one lies in a

ditch for the others to cover him with branches and rubbish. The numbers are called on leaving off work, and one is missing. Search proves fruitless, and, after all have left the mine, the man rises from his temporary grave and makes for the woods. The great difficulty is not to get away, but to keep away. The country is so vast that they cannot travel far before the approach of winter, and then, if they have escaped in company, they have the choice of returning to prison food or eating one another. They have, moreover, another difficulty with the natives. In the Trans-Baikal district, the Buriats are said to hunt down escaped convicts, and shoot them like vermin; which is probably explained by what was told me of the Gilyaks on the Lower Amur, that they receive three roubles a-head for every escaped convict they bring to the police, whether dead or alive. The natives argue thus: "If you shoot a squirrel, you get only his skin; whereas, if you shoot a *varnak*" (which is the nickname they give to convicts), "you get his skin and his clothing too." Thus it is very difficult for them to get out of the country.

There are several reasons, however, which conduce to their running away. A long-term prisoner, for instance, condemned to twenty years' labour, makes his escape from a penal colony, wanders about the country during the summer months, and, on the approach of winter, commits a crime and is caught. He is asked for his name, to which he replies that it is *Ivan Vepomnoostchi*—that is, "John Know-nothing." He is asked where he comes from. He replies that he entirely forgets. What has been his occupation? His memory fails him. He is asked for his papers. He

says that he has none, or perhaps trumps up a story that he has lost them—and so on. Accordingly he is tried, and is sentenced, say to five years' hard labour, for which he inwardly thanks the Court, and goes off, it may be, to a new prison, having effected a saving of the sorrows of eighteen years. Should he not play his game aright, however, and should he be detected, then his past service goes for nothing; he is most likely flogged, and sent back to a harder berth than he had before. Some run away under the influence of drink, and discover their mistake too late. Again, other reasons which may be supposed to conduce to flight are—the fear of punishment for new faults committed, the desire to get back to social and family ties in Europe, or, in the case of those twice imprisoned, to ties which they have formed whilst settled in Siberia.

I am disposed to think that the severance of family and social ties is with many the really hard pinch of Siberian exile. One lady, who had a convict for her nurse, told me that she gave her her own clothes, paid her £1 a month, provided her a home in the best house in the province, to say nothing of sundry perquisites, and yet she sometimes found her, when alone, in tears; and, on asking what was the matter, the answer was—"Oh, if I only knew something of my friends in Russia!" She had not learnt to write, her friends were in the same position, and the difficulty of procuring an amanuensis, together with uncertainty as to address, made communication almost impossible; and so she said she could not tell whether her friends were dead or alive, or what might be their fate. I recollect, too, in a prison at Uleaborg, in Finland, finding a woman who had escaped from exile, of whom I asked how she

liked Siberia; to which she replied that as regards the country she had nothing to complain of; but, she pathetically added, "I did *so* want to see my mother!" And to do this she had taken flight, during three years had traversed more than 2,000 miles, had reached her old home, and was then retaken!

But nothing has yet been said of the transport of the exiles. Of old they had to walk all the way, and the journey and stoppages occupied a long time. The woman at Uleaborg said she was eight months going from Petersburg to Tobolsk. In this matter, however, as in many others, the lot of the banished was much mitigated during the reign of the late Emperor, especially after 1867. The introduction of railways and river steamboats greatly facilitated this. Accordingly, those in Russia who are condemned to Siberia are now first gathered to a central prison in Moscow, where they may be seen entering the city in droves. A very affecting sight was the first of these droves I saw in 1874. The van consisted of soldiers with fixed bayonets. Behind them marched the worst of the men prisoners, with chains on their ankles, the clanking of which as they moved was most unmusical. Then followed men without fetters, but chained by the hand to what looked like a long iron rod; and next after them the women convicts; and then the most touching part of the whole—women, not convicts, but wives who had elected to be banished with their husbands. Then there were wagons containing children, the old and infirm, baggage, etc., the rear being brought up by armed soldiers. As the prisoners moved along the street, passengers stepped from the pavement to give them presents. To this the guards who walked at the

side made no objection, and in this way, in some of the towns, the prisoners gather, or used to gather, a considerable sum of money; for the woman at Uleaborg said that the money given to her drove of 156 prisoners, during their three days' stay in Moscow, amounted to about 30*s.* each.* More recently, however, a Pole, who began his walking in 1871, farther east, at Perm, told me his receipts from the wayside charity of the people were insignificant.

Being gathered then at Moscow, the prisoners are sent off in droves of about 700 each by rail to Nijni Novgorod. This commences in spring, as soon as the river navigation opens, and two or three parties go off each week. They began, the year of my visit, on May 8th. On reaching Nijni Novgorod they are placed in a large barge built for the purpose, which carries from 600 to 800, and is tugged by steamer to Perm.

Hence they are taken twice a week by rail to Ekaterineburg; 350 on Wednesday, and 500 on Saturday. Their walking, however, does not yet begin; for the 200 miles remaining to Tiumen is got over by conveyances, each of which, drawn by three horses, carries about six prisoners; and thus they arrive at the first prison in Siberia proper.

Now begins their distribution. Those who are con-

* M. Andreoli, in the story of his exile, remarks that the Moscow merchants had established a considerable fund for dividing among prisoners going to Siberia, and that when a party arrived, the director of the fund was at once informed. He then divided equally among them the means at his disposal, which was never less than 14*s.* or 16*s.*, and sometimes as much as 30*s.* or 32*s.* to each person. Men, women, and children shared alike, so that a man with a family got substantial help; but this fund, I am told, no longer exists. Both M. Andreoli and Baron Rosen speak of the kindness of the Siberian peasants to exiles on their journey.

demned to Western Siberia are assigned to particular towns or villages, whither they are sent by water, if possible, or, if not, on foot. Those, however, who are condemned to Eastern Siberia are placed in another barge, and taken on the Tura, Tobol, Irtish, Obi, and the Tom, to Tomsk, whence their walking eastward begins. When not hindered by accidental causes, they usually rest one day and walk two, marching sometimes twenty miles or more a day. Temporary prisons called *étapes* are erected along the road to receive them for the night, and in the towns are larger buildings called *pcrisylnie* prisons, in which they may rest, if necessary, a longer time, and where there are hospitals, medical attendants, etc. Thus they go on day after day, week after week, month after month, to their destined place or prison, to Irkutsk, to Yakutsk, to Chita, or, if perchance they are destined to Sakhalin, they continue to Stretinsk on the Shilka, thence by steam on the river Amur to Nikolaefsk, and so by ship to the island. Two years since, however, the Russian Government adopted a new and better plan with prisoners intended for Sakhalin, and, instead of sending them across Asia, shipped them from Odessa, *viâ* the Suez Canal, to the Pacific direct. A large merchant steamer, the *Nijni Novgorod*, was employed for the purpose, sailing under the Government flag, which made the passage in about two months, the prisoners arriving in excellent health, and without one death on the passage.

I mention this fact the more readily as I heard it in the Admiral's house at Vladivostock, where the ship arrived a week or two before I did, and where it was said that one of the Japanese newspapers had copied

from an English paper to the effect that half the prisoners had died on the passage, and that the rest were in a terribly sick condition. As an Englishman I was called to account for this, and I found that the minds of some of my Russian friends were very sore with the editors of English newspapers, by reason of alleged misrepresentations received at their hands. They complained, moreover, that whereas some of the newspapers were ready enough to publish against the Russians all they knew that was bad, they were slow to acknowledge the good, and were not always ready to recall what had been said, even when proved to have been false. Not having the facts before me, I could only put in a plea regarding the desire of English journals to be first in the field with news, and the consequent rapid manner in which editorial work has to be done. Knowing something of an editor's difficulties, I felt justified in expressing the hope that there had been no intentional departure from fairness, uprightness, and integrity. I am not sure, however, that I should have been ready with an answer had I known how the case really stood.*

* On reaching England I was referred to what had appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, first, on June 2nd, under the heading, "Reign of Terror in Russia," where it was stated that "a large number of convicts are about to be despatched to Sakhalin from Odessa, the service which provides for the ordinary transportation of criminals to Siberia being already overtaxed." Again, on July 28th, under the same heading appeared half a column of large print, speaking of "the appalling evidence of Russian barbarity" which their "own correspondent" had obtained. The correspondent informant visited the ship, and observed to the officer in command that the prisoners so badly provided for would never survive the passage, to which the Russian officer was said to have replied, "Well, so much the better for all parties if they do not," and so on. On the next day, under the heading "Russian Barbarities," it appeared that Mr. Joseph Cowen asked in Parliament whether the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had received information that 700 persons, mostly men

I have thus described the transport of ordinary exiles to Siberia. There is another category of prisoners—arch-heretics in political or revolutionary affairs, Nihilists, etc., of whom the authorities wish to take special care, who are not sent with the common herd, but are individually placed between two gendarmes, and sent off to travel alone direct to their destination. I am of opinion that the popular notion as to their numbers is exaggerated, and that they are much fewer than is commonly supposed. I shall offer my reasons for thinking thus later on. These persons, while travelling, are never allowed, under any pretence, to be out of sight of their keepers, who are charged to allow no one to speak to them. This, however, is not always carried out to the letter; for a friend of mine, coming one day to a swollen river in Siberia, near Omsk, where a gendarme was also waiting with a young lady prisoner of seventeen, was allowed to speak to her, and she told him that since she left Petersburg,

and women of education, had been packed in the hold of a small ship —(the *Daily Telegraph* had described it the same day as a man-of-war of 4,000 tons)—that 250 had died on board, and 150 were landed in a dying state, etc. Most of this appeared in large print, and attention was called thereto. But by August 5th a change had come over the scene, and all or nearly all the foregoing was found to be untrue; and then, in their *smallest* print, simply headed "Reuter's Telegram," the *Daily Telegraph* informed its readers in six lines that "the *Novoe Vremya* of August 4th states that the steamer *Nijni Novgorod* arrived at Nagasaki on Friday last, and that the convicts were well in health." Now here would appear to have been ample room for, if not an apology, yet an expression of regret that the Russians had been so very much misrepresented; but, if such appeared, it has escaped me. On August 9th, the Russian journals are alluded to as joining in a chorus of indignation against Messrs. Cowen and Mundella for their motion in Parliament, but nothing is recalled of what had been said. I know not how the foregoing extracts may strike the reader, but the perusal of them did not cause me to plume myself on the score of English fairness and our supposed love of justice.

a distance of 1,700 miles, she had not once had a gendarme out of her presence. When there are several prisoners of this character travelling in a manner together, they are kept separate, and are not allowed to speak to each other. But even this cannot always be enforced; for not long before my arrival at Tiumen a batch of about ten such persons had passed. On arriving at Ekaterineburg, a separate carriage was taken for each; but when they came at Tiumen to the riverside, standing and waiting for the steamer, they were able to snatch a few moments for conversing together. I know of another instance, in which a young woman had been suspected of a political offence, and been warned by the authorities to desist: but, not profiting by the warning, she was arrested, sent off with a gendarme, and on her way met a gentleman whom she asked to convey a letter to her friends. This of course was against the gendarme's orders, but, on being assured that the letter should be only of a private nature, and three roubles being put into his hand, he allowed it to be written and taken. This was in European Russia. Further east they become still more lax.

There is yet a third case, in which exiles are permitted to journey by themselves like ordinary travellers. We met a lady who was forced to quit Petersburg at twenty-four hours' notice; but owing to her position, or through interest, she was allowed to travel alone; and in this manner, by reason of illness on the way, during which her money was stolen, she was a twelvemonth reaching her location in Eastern Siberia. This, however, was the only case we met with of an exile travelling privately, and I presume similar cases are very

exceptional. Whilst the exiles are on the march, and, in certain cases, whilst they are living like colonists, they receive clothing and an allowance for food, either in money or in kind; but this subject will be best treated under the description of prisons, to which subsequent chapters will be devoted.

CHAPTER V.

FROM TIUMEN TO TOBOLSK.

General remarks on Siberia.—Limits.—Area.—Temperature.—Divisions.—Roads.—Ethnography.—Language.—Posting to Tobolsk.—Floods.—Spring roads.—Villages of Tatars.—Their history.—Characteristics.—Costumes.—Occupation.—Worship.—Language.

BETWEEN Ekaterineburg and Tiumen, as already intimated, the traveller passes into Siberia,—concerning which country it may be well here to make some general observations, with a view to the better understanding of future chapters. The western boundary of this immense region runs from the Arctic Ocean along the chain of the Northern Urals to a point in about the same latitude as Lake Onega; then, leaving the mountains a little to the left, it comes down in a tolerably straight line to a point midway between the Sea of Aral and Lake Balkash; thence it turns eastward to and along the northern shore of the lake, and, going further east, joins the Altai Mountains. All Russia lying to the west and south of this line is either in Europe or in Asia; all lying to the east of it is Siberia, the length and breadth of which are the same as of Russia in Asia; whilst its area, as given in recent Russian statistics, is 4,750,000 square miles, or more than three thousand millions of acres (3,185,510,900), of which nearly one-fifth is arable.

The river Yenesei (roughly speaking) divides the country into east and west, the surface of the western portion being almost entirely flat, whilst the eastern portion, especially towards the Pacific, is mountainous. Siberia extends over nearly 40 degrees of latitude, and in climate ranges from arctic to semi-tropical. In passing through the country from west to east, from the end of May to the beginning of October, between the 50th and 57th parallels, we found the temperature much the same as during the same period in England. When steaming on the Obi, at the beginning of June, on the 62nd parallel, my minimum thermometer fell during the night as low as 35° Fahrenheit, but rose by 9 o'clock to 75°. English winter clothing, therefore, by day was not too warm. Again, at Vladivostock, lying on the 43rd parallel, the heat towards the end of September was not too great for clothing suited to an English summer. All through the journey, however, when sleeping in the tarantass, it was sufficiently cold in the early morning, whatever might be the heat of the day, to make an ulster coat acceptable.

The political divisions of the country are two viceroyalties, called respectively Western and Eastern Siberia. Each of these is divided into "governments" and "oblasts."*

* I am not clearly informed as to the exact difference between a government and an oblast, but I am under the impression that an ob last (which means a "province") is a territory often newly acquired and under martial law, whereas, in a "government," things have settled down, and the civil and military organizations are under separate control. The word "oblasts" is sometimes translated "territories"; their relation to "governments" being similar to the relation between "Territories" and "States" in America. The oblasts in Siberia are Akmolinsk and Semipolatinsk in the west, and Yakutsk and the Sea Coast in the east; but, to avoid confusion, we will speak of them all as governments or provinces. Each province has its capital, which ranks as a "government" town, and each *uyezd* has like-

The means of communication in Siberia are more ample than a foreigner might suppose. There are, indeed, no railways; but when the line, now in course of construction, from Ekaterineburg to Tiumen is finished, the English traveller will be able to go by steam from Charing Cross to Tomsk, a distance of 5,000 miles, and further east than Ceylon. As it is now, when Tiumen is reached, river communication becomes possible with each of the four capitals of Western Siberia. Again, the Amur presents a water passage inland from the Pacific, by which Nikolaefsk, Blagovestchensk, and almost Chita, may be reached; and now that Captain Wiggins has led the way through the Kara Gates, and Professor Nordenskjold has followed on to Behring's Strait, Russia may congratulate herself on having for the commerce of Siberia three additional outlets—the Obi, the Yenesei, and the Lena—to both Europe and Japan.

Again, there is the communication by roads, which is the more important on account of the many months the rivers are frozen over. There are two post roads by which Siberia is entered from the west; one through Orenburg, which is little used, and the other through Ekaterineburg to Tiumen. There is also a third road,

wise its principal town. Each province is subdivided into districts, called *uyezds; uyezds* into *vollosts;* and *vollosts* into villages, called *sclo*, if with a church, or *derevnia* if without. In the villages the chief man is called a *starosta;* in the vollosts a *zasidatil.* Over each uyezd commonly presides an ispravnik; over each province a governor; and over each vice-royalty a governor-general. Western Siberia is divided into four provinces, namely: Tobolsk, Tomsk, and Semipolatinsk, each of which has a capital, bearing the name of the province; and Akmolinsk, which has Omsk for its capital. Eastern Siberia is divided into six provinces: Irkutsk and Yakutsk, with capitals of the same names; and Yeneseisk, Trans-Baikal, Amur, and Sea Coast (or Maritime), with capitals named Krasnoiarsk, Chita, Blagovestchensk, and Nikolaefsk.

not much used, which crosses the Urals further north, and connects *Veliki Ustiug*, on the Northern Dwina, with Irbit. The high road to China leaves Tiumen in an easterly direction to Omsk, where the routes from Orenburg, Semipolatinsk, and Central Asia converge. The main road goes east to Tomsk, where it is joined by roads on the north from Narym, and on the south from Barnaul; it then continues eastward to Krasnoiarsk, where it is joined by roads, on the north from Yeneseisk, and on the south from Minusinsk. After this it takes a south-easterly direction to Irkutsk, whence there go two ways—one to the north-east, to Yakutsk, and so on to Kamchatka; the other, and principal one, to the south-east and round the base of Lake Baikal to Verchne Udinsk. Here it divides into two, that to the right leading to Kiakhta and China; that to the left running east, through Chita to Stretinsk. Thence the traveller proceeds on the Shilka and Amur —by boat in summer, and on the ice in winter—past Blagovestchensk to Khabarovka, whence, to the left, he continues on the Amur to Nikolaefsk, or he turns to the right up the Ussuri and the Sungacha to Vladivostock. Along all these roads there is postal and, except towards Yakutsk, telegraphic communication also.

An ethnographical map of Siberia, coloured according to the area which is occupied by its various nationalities, reveals the fact that only a very small portion of the country is inhabited by Russians.* In fact, a narrow strip of country suffices to show their *habitat*, if drawn

* The total population, Russian and aboriginal, according to the *Journal de St. Petersbourg*, August 7th, 1881, quoting the most recent statistics, numbers 1,388,000 souls; but I am not sure whether "souls" may not mean *males* only, as it sometimes does in Russia. They are divided among

on either side of the great land and water highways, and somewhat widened in the mining districts of the Yeneseisk and Tomsk governments; and as the aborigines do not generally follow agriculture, it will be inferred that those parts of the land which are under cultivation lie within this narrow strip. The same observation will also indicate that, whilst the language of the towns and the highways is Russian, a knowledge of other tongues is needed for extensive intercourse with the natives.

Having made these general remarks concerning Siberia, we proceed on our journey from Tiumen to Tobolsk, *en route* for Tomsk, which is best reached in summer by river, steaming for 1,800 miles, the post road from Tiumen to Tomsk passing through Omsk, or by a somewhat nearer way, leaving Omsk to the south, and then crossing the Barabinsky steppe.

We arrived at Tiumen on Thursday, the 29th May, bringing with us two loads of luggage, and leaving the rest to follow by "goods'" transport. There was steam communication between Tiumen and Tobolsk twice a week, the passage occupying a day and a half; but the steamer that went on to Tomsk was to leave on the following Monday, by which time the remaining luggage could not arrive. It became, therefore, a question whether we should wait for it or go before, in the hope that, whilst we were making *détours*, our books might overtake us. My Finnish friend, Miss Alba Hellman, had sent me some pamphlets for distribution amongst a colony of Finns and others from the Baltic provinces,

the provinces as follows: Tobolsk, 463,000; Tomsk, 324,000; Irkutsk, 165,000; Yeneseisk, 164,000; Trans-Baikal, 141,000; Amur, 3,000; Sea Coast, 13,000; and Yakutsk, 112,000. This says nothing of Akmolinsk and Semipolatinsk

numbering about 1,800, and located at Ruschkova, not far from the city of Omsk. We at first thought, therefore, to make this *détour*, and then, instead of returning to Tiumen, to go "across country" to Tobolsk, and thus see the prisons, and wait for the next steamer but one, in which we hoped all our luggage might be forwarded; but this plan our friends at Tiumen condemned. The question then remained, How could we see Tobolsk? The steamer in passing would stay but for an hour or two, and another boat would not follow for a week. The only alternative was to drive. But terrible accounts were given of the roads, which had not yet dried after the breaking up of the frost. Not to see Tobolsk, however, was out of the question, and we therefore determined to make the attempt by road, hoping to reach the city on Saturday, see the prisons on Monday, and take steamer the following day.

Accordingly, on Friday night, late, we left Tiumen in two tarantasses, with three horses to each. At the first station the post-master gave us warning that the roads were very bad, and that only one or two travellers had passed that way since the waters had subsided. On coming to the first river, it was found to be unapproachable at the usual place of embarkation. A ferry-boat had, therefore, to be brought to us, some six miles out of the way, and so we were kept waiting five hours. Whilst thus delayed, report said that the post-master kept hardly half the men required by his contract for working the ferry, and, further, that the men were sometimes extortionate. When, therefore we had rowed six miles down the stream to the landing-place, and the post-master could give no satisfactory reason why we had been thus kept, we thought it right, for the

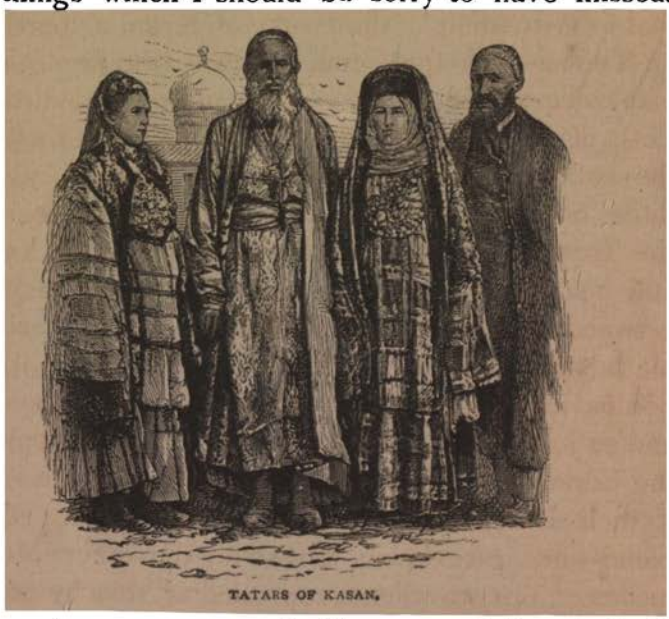
benefit of future travellers, to enter in his "book for complaints," bearing the Government seal, our regrets that his neglect had detained us five hours.

About eleven o'clock the same night another episode occurred, which illustrates the pleasures of spring travelling in Siberia. The post-master gave us, what we never had before or after,—two outriders to convey us over a bad place on the road. Towards midnight we slept, when, being awakened by repeated shouting, I peeped out and saw that we were plunging among willows and mire. The outriders were holding up the tarantass to keep it from toppling over. Then came more shouting, with desperate jerking and pulling of the horses, which were up to their knees in bog, till solid ground was gained, and all stopped for breath. The next thing was to get the luggage tarantass through. We heard in the distance a crash, and lo! one of the shafts was broken. A horseman went back to the village for a new one, but in vain, and the old one was repaired. Whilst waiting we had time to look around. It was not yet morning, but the rays of the sun, which in northern countries are seen above the horizon all the night through at this time of the year, shed sufficient light on our darkness to give a weird appearance to all that was visible.

Silence was broken only by the incessant croaking of frogs, and by the men, who were relating to each other how they had got through. One had slipped into water up to his waist. The temperature was anything but warm; but, poor fellows! they seemed to regard things as in their normal condition, and uttered repeated thanks when they were dismissed with a gratuity of a few extra kopecks. Further on

we had to wade through water above the axletrees, and during the last stage to cross five streams, the last of which was the Irtish. Tobolsk at length was reached, but not until Sunday night, and after a journey of forty-eight hours instead of twenty, as we expected.

By posting from Tiumen to Tobolsk, we purchased experience of early summer roads; and, in so doing, saw things which I should be sorry to have missed.



TATARS OF KASAN.

Among these were several villages peopled exclusively by Siberian Tatars. These people differ in one important respect from most of the other nations living with the Russians in Siberia, in that they have a history, and can look back to great princes who have made a name for themselves in the annals of the world. They are remnants of those who, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in the days of Genghis Khan and his descendants, overran Northern Asia, and wrested

the land from its aboriginal inhabitants. They pushed their conquests to the Volga, and Serai, on that river, became the capital where their great Khans (known as the Khans of the Golden Horde) lived and reigned, and whence they long proved formidable antagonists to the Russians. At length came their disruption. Kasan was founded in the fifteenth century, and was the capital of a small khanate. A second khanate was that of Astrakhan, a third that of Krim, a fourth that of Tiumen—all fragments of the main horde which had collapsed in the fifteenth century. Towards the close of the sixteenth century, the Russians took from the Tatars Kasan and all else west of the Urals, and those on the east of the mountains, in the region of the Irtish, were afterwards subjugated by Yermak and his followers. Tatar villages may still be found between Kasan and Tobolsk, beyond which these people inhabit a district stretching south to the Kirghese hordes, and south-east as far as the Altai Mountains, and so joining the territory west of Irkutsk peopled by the Buriats.* The Tatars live among and are subject to their Russian conquerors ; but the two races do not blend—one race being Christian, the other Mohammedan. The traveller is reminded of this by noticing

* Mr. Wahl, in his "Land of the Czar," which contains much valuable ethnographical information, gives the number of the Siberian Tatars of the governments of Tobolsk and Tomsk at 40,000. Dr. Latham also, in his "Native Races of the Russian Empire," traces their affinities with many peoples both in Europe and Asia, all of whom he classifies under the general name of Turks, and points out that the area covered by the Turkish stock is perhaps larger than that of any other race in the world. The general name of Turks includes the Tatars of Kasan, of Siberia, the Caucasus, and several other places ; also the Kirghese, Yakutes, and many smaller tribes, some of which will hereafter be referred to under the respective provinces which they inhabit. The Turkish stock are, as to their religion, Christians, Pagans, and Mohammedans: Christians

that the Tatars, when on a journey, carry with them their wooden basins, for they will not drink from a vessel used by Russians; and so, in some parts, Russians will not drink from Tatar cups, though this exclusiveness wears away where Russians are many and Tatars are few. The Tatars have a good physique: dark eyes, swarthy skin, black hair, and high cheek-bones. Their strength of body is such as to make them excellent workmen, as may be seen by the enormous burdens they carry in loading vessels at Nijni Novgorod and Kasan. They are much liked in the capitals as coachmen, for they understand horses well. I heard good accounts of them likewise as servants in the hotel at Petersburg. They are not drunken, and are therefore valuable as waiters. Their women are supposed to wear veils, and do so in the cities. In the villages they content themselves with shawls, which are drawn nearly over the face when a stranger approaches. Men and boys, whether in the house or abroad, wear a small skull-cap, sometimes richly embroidered; and on high days some are seen with white turbans. These and their long cassock-like coats give the men a decidedly oriental appearance. Both men and women wear top-boots, and generally goloshes over them, so that, on entering the house or the mosque, they have only to slip off the goloshes to secure clean shoes.*

where they have been won over by the Russians to the Greek Church; Pagans where they have not been reached even by Mohammedanism, but have remained in the darkness of aboriginal Shamanism, as is still the case with a few of the Yakute Turks; and Mohammedans, which is the case for the most part with those of the country through which we passed.

* The natural home of the Turk or the Tatar is the steppe, where they dwell in tents, and are herdsmen, horsemen, and in some cases camel-drivers. Those we passed gain their livelihood by agriculture, by

In the Tatar villages the green domes and pinnacles of the Russian church, surmounted with the cross, were of course wanting; and in their places were found Mohammedan mosques, with minarets surmounted with the crescent. These latter reminded one of the shingled steeples of English village churches. Our first sight of Tatar worship was on the Volga, on board the steamer at sunset. Three Tatars approached the paddle-box, on a clean part of which they spread a small carpet. Leaving their goloshes on the deck, they knelt on the carpet, bowed their heads to the ground, and, rubbing their hands as if washing, chanted their prayers. They then appeared to pray silently in deepest reverence with closed eyes, and as if in total oblivion that a crowd was looking on. We were told that the pious pray thus at least three times a day, wherever they may be. At Kasan we had an opportunity of seeing their congregational worship in a Tatar mosque. Permission was given us to enter, if at the bottom of the stairs we would take off our goloshes, or, having none, our boots. The Mohammedan reason for this practice seemed to be that they did not wish to bring into the place anything soiled or unclean.

The building inside had a square room, with the barest of bare white walls, without attempt at ornament of any sort or kind. The only piece of furniture even was a high wooden rostrum approached by stairs, from which exhortations are delivered on Fridays. There were no chairs or benches, or any resemblance to an altar or table. Those who assembled early sat on the ground with their legs beneath them, apparently

the breeding of cattle, and by the transport of goods. Their houses were neat and cleanly, and compared favourably with those of the Russians.

for private prayer, reading, and meditation; but upon some one beginning to murmur in a low strain, all jumped up, ran to the front, and arranged themselves in ranks. They commenced their prayers by placing the thumb into or on the lower part of the ears, with the palms of the hands outwards. Then they stood, bowed, knelt, and then lowered the head to the ground. This is done a certain number of times, according to the hour of the day, twice at early morning, and increasing till five or more at the last of the five daily services. At the conclusion of prayer they passed their hands over their faces. All these external acts of devotion were done by each rank with the utmost precision, and the histrionic effect, as some would call it, was excellent; only that to one in the rear of four or five ranks of men, of each of whom nothing could be seen but the soles of their feet and the seats of their trousers, the spectacle was somewhat grotesque. In the less demonstrative parts of the service, however, there was not an eye that wandered, with the single exception of a man who bestowed a glance on us strangers; nor a man who did not behave in a manner becoming the occupation in which he was engaged. Some few who came in late did not join those whose service had begun, but commenced a separate one for themselves.

The floor was covered with clean matting, on which lay here and there a common rosary made of date-stones, ninety-nine in number, and divided by beads into three sections.

The Tatars objected to give us a translation in Russian of the prayers they said thereon. We heard elsewhere that they have ninety-nine names of God;

and a Tatar prisoner—apparently a gentleman—told me that they had a separate prayer for each bead. The uneducated, however, do not know these many names of the Deity. On the following day we had the opportunity of asking a monk concerning the Russian rosary, which differs from both the Mohammedan and the Roman.*

The Tatars can read the Scriptures in Turkish, and are apparently not indisposed to do so, provided it does not attract attention. A colporteur at Moscow told me that he sold fifty-seven copies to Tatars in the villages between Kasan and Perm, though they became angry in

* The mention of all three invites a short study in "comparative religions," which may be briefly made as follows:—The complete Roman rosary consists of 150 beads on a string, divided into 15 decades, between each of which is a large or distinctive bead. Where the two ends join there are 5 other beads attached, and at the loose end a crucifix. It is used thus:—On the crucifix is repeated the Creed; on the first bead the Lord's Prayer; on each of the next three the "Hail, Mary!" and on the fifth bead the Lord's Prayer. This is by way of introduction. Then on each of the first 10 beads are said these words: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,—Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen." When this has been said ten times, the "Pater Noster" is said on the dividing bead, and this is continued till 150 prayers have been offered to the Virgin, and 15 to "our Father," and then the odd beads are used in inverse order for a conclusion, as before for an introduction.

The Russian rosary looks smaller, but has also certain beads larger, or at least distinguishable from the others. It is not worn or used by ordinary members of the Russian Church, but only by monks and nuns. I was told by a nun at Moscow that they say on each bead, "May Jesus Christ have mercy on sinners!" but a monk at Kasan said (what is not irreconcilable with the former) that on each ordinary bead they say, "Lord God of heaven and Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us"; and on the large and distinctive bead they say a prayer either to Jesus Christ or the Virgin, the latter beginning something to this effect: "Thou mighty Mary, hear our prayers, and take away from thine unworthy servants all sin," etc. Lastly, we were told that the Mohammedan continues to say on his rosary, "There is but one God, and Mohammed is His prophet"; and that if they do not know the ninety-nine names of God they merely count the beads.

the larger towns if he attempted openly to sell them in the Tatar quarter. I took with me a few Turkish gospels, and among the prisoners at Barnaul found three Tatars, one of whom could read. As we repassed the door of their room, all three were seen sitting with their legs beneath them, the two illiterate ones listening to their scholarly friend with eager attention. We met several of this race in prison and elsewhere, as we proceeded onwards, but I do not remember passing through whole villages of Tatars after we left the district of Tobolsk. Hence we were the more glad not to have missed these.

THE COUNTY PRISON AT ÅBO. *Page 63.*

CHAPTER VI.

SIBERIAN PRISONS.

Old Finnish prisons.—Model Petersburg prison.—Officers.—Contraband importations.—Russian prisons of six kinds.—Siberian prisons of three kinds: their number, location, structure, furniture.—Prisoners: their classification.—Kansk statistics.—Method of trial.—Remands.—Exchanging names and punishments.

THE prisons of Russia occupy a position midway between the dungeons of the Middle Ages and the modern cellular abodes for criminals of the nineteenth century. A few of them, however, approach very near these extremes on either side. With regard to Finland, it is hardly fair to hold the Russian Government responsible for the condition of its prison affairs, because, although the Emperor is Grand Duke of that country, he allows these liege subjects to make their own laws. Nevertheless, I can never forget the vividness with which my boyhood's reading came back to me of Robin Hood and the dungeons of Nottingham Castle, when I first visited the old prisons of Åbo and Wiborg. The descent by steps with candles to prisoners in the lower rooms, the dim light entering by windows in walls ten feet thick, the clanking of chains, the like to which I have seen in no other country except perhaps Mongolia—these things spoke more eloquently than a visit to the former prison of Sir Walter Raleigh, or even the unused Ratisbon chamber for the torture of

Protestant heretics; and that because these northern prisons were inhabited by living men. The majority of the Finnish prisons, however, and certainly all the new ones, are better than the two I have mentioned; though, unless a change has taken place since 1876, the Finns still have and use sets of irons nearly ten times the weight of any others I have seen in Europe. To pass to the other extreme. One sees in Petersburg a brand-new prison, which may be supposed to represent the very beau ideal of what a house of detention ought to be.

It is only right to say, however, before going further, that the condition of prisons and criminals in Russia is in a transitional state. The authorities have seen the necessity for reforms for at least 20 years, and great pains have been taken that these reforms should be made judiciously and effectively. Deputies have been sent to visit the prisons of other countries and report thereon; a commission has been appointed to receive the reports, to consider and debate, and so thoroughly to "shed upon the question the light of science." All this has been done, and the reforms are yearly expected to take place, pecuniary reasons alone delaying the change for the better. Meanwhile a model prison has been built in the capital, and those who wish to see what Russia *can* do should visit this house of detention for persons awaiting their trial. It is built in the shape of a right angle, having two long corridors four storeys high. There are 285 separate cells for men, 32 for women, others for confinement in common, as well as places for associated and solitary exercise. Into cell No. 227 the late Emperor once entered, of which they keep up the remembrance by

allowing no one to be confined therein. No expense appears to have been spared in building the prison. The floors are of asphalte, and the door of each cell is of solid oak. Within are iron bedsteads, made to fold and hook up neatly against the wall. The tables and seats are of sheet iron, with hinges; and, both within the cells and without, every article and fitting of brass is rubbed to a high degree of polish. The officers move about noiselessly in felt shoes, so that they can unexpectedly and at any moment observe a prisoner through the wire-covered inspection-holes. In the infirmary are 10 cells for those who are to be kept apart, and 32 beds for those who live in common. There is likewise a room in which 40 men may mingle by day, and a general sleeping apartment with 36 bedsteads, across each of which wire is stretched, making for the prisoner a hard but clean, and, I should imagine, not uncomfortable bed. There is also a room for bookbinding, where a few can work.

The building contains three places of worship, for Russians, Roman Catholics, and Protestants respectively, the Russian having a very handsome *ikonostasis* and chandelier; and I was pleased to find that, if a man can read, he has always a New Testament in his cell, and further that, by asking, he can obtain from the library other books in addition. This is as it should be.

In the female division we found for warders superior-looking young women dressed in uniform, the insignia of office on their collars being a pair of crossed keys. Some of the women prisoners, as with the men, are placed together in common, and in some cases they have their choice of solitary or social life. This is true in a sense other than that which first

appears ; for one lady prisoner, a criminal condemned to Siberia, was about to take to herself a husband before proceeding thither, and the happy event was to be celebrated in the prison on the morning after my visit. Peeping through the food aperture of one of the doors was the face of a pretty young woman, a political prisoner, in whose possession had been found suspicious books. There was a women's reception-room, having a bath warmed by gas ; but as it was found to cost about five shillings to heat, it is not surprising that this particular bath is seldom used.

Dark cells were shown to us, in which a prisoner may not be put for more than six successive days. The place where prisoners were allowed to converse with their friends was dark, which is not usual ; and I observed in it no place for an officer to sit between the parties whilst they were speaking.

The attempts of the authorities to keep the prisoners from intercourse with one another, and with the outer world, do not yet appear to be perfectly successful.

A	B	C	D	E
1				

The Polish prisoners in Warsaw, according to M. Andreoli, had a plan by which they could pass news in a couple of hours to all the prisoners in the fortress. A square was divided into 25 spaces for the 25 letters

of the Polish alphabet. One knock was understood to mean A, two knocks B, and so on; or, again, these signals might be changed by one knock, signifying V, and so forth; this dumb speech being kept up by tapping on the walls. This, however, is only one method.

In the chapel of the model prison at Petersburg are 24 boxes for prisoners whom they wish to keep from holding communication with each other, even by a look. But the partitions which separate them are only of wood, and I observed that those I entered had been furtively bored with small holes, through which conversation could be held. Again, the prisoners are allowed to receive food from their friends outside, and, although it is first examined by the officials, the friends manage sometimes to introduce for the prisoners some strange culinary concoctions. There were brought to a man, for instance, one day 230 roubles in a basin of buttermilk. Again, another man was frequently found the worse for drink in his cell. Milk was regularly brought to him, and duly tasted by the authorities; but still the man got drunk. At last they discovered that the jug in which the milk was brought had a false bottom with an aperture in the handle, and so the mystery was solved. What will not topers do to procure drink? On arriving at Werchne Udinsk, we heard that a drunken woman had just been detected in trying to smuggle spirits into the prison in a pig's entrails!

I saw quite a collection of contraband articles at Petersburg, which had been found in the possession of prisoners. Among them were knives (one ingeniously made from a steel pen), playing cards, and dominoes—all of them of original and unique, if not of artistic,

character; also a file, for which a prisoner had given a warder 50 shillings. The man, too, had made busy use of his purchase. He set his mind upon breaking loose, and thought to file through a bar of iron an inch or more thick that confined him. But he could do his work only during the time that the warders were at dinner and at supper, and then not too loudly, giving 200 strokes of the file at dinner and 100 at supper time. He went on thus for three months, and then managed to break the iron. But he was detected, and condemned to Siberia, whither he had already been sent before, and whence he had managed to escape. There he has probably by this time found less costly and well-built prisons from which to break loose.

Before speaking, however, of the prisons of Siberia, it may be well to observe that in European Russia there are at least six various kinds of prisons. There is, first, the fortress—such as that at Schlüsselburg, in which it is generally supposed are confined grave offenders, especially the political and revolutionary. I have not visited one of these. Next there are military prisons, in which severity of discipline is said to be similar to that of the fortress. Then there are hard-labour prisons, in which long-term convicts work out their sentences. There are also houses of correction, where short-term prisoners do the same; likewise houses of detention, in which persons are kept awaiting their trial. I heard also of "houses of industry," which, unless I am mistaken, are somewhat like our reformatories; and, lastly, there are buildings in which prisoners on their march to distant places stay temporarily—some only for a few days, others for weeks. These nice distinctions, however, can be drawn only in large towns in European

Russia. In Siberia, especially in small towns, the same building serves for all classes of prisoners, the best arrangement practicable being made for special cases. Speaking generally, and from my own observation rather than from accurate information upon the subject, there appeared to me to be in Siberia three classes of buildings which the English would call by the general name of prisons. There is, first, the *étape*, in which exiles on the march rest for a night or two; next, the *perisylnie* prison, in which, for various reasons, exiles may have to wait—it may be during the winter, or until the ice be broken up on the rivers; and, thirdly, the *ostrog*, which means a stronghold, and is a prison in general, where a man may be simply confined, work at a trade, or eat and sleep after working outside in the fields or mines. I have no statistics of the total number of prisons of all sorts in Siberia, but suppose it cannot be less than 300, which may be roughly computed thus: Nikolaefsk is more than 9,000 versts from Tiumen, and, supposing that convicts walk 30 versts a day, they would require 300 resting-places for that route alone. Some parts of the way, it is true, are traversed in summer by river communication; but no notice has been taken in my estimate of off-lying routes north and south, as, for instance, to Yakutsk, Barnaul, etc. The expenses, therefore, of building and keeping in repair this vast number of prisons must be very considerable.

As to the location of the prisons. The *étapes* are found all along the road from Tiumen to the Amur. There will also be found a prison or lock-up in most of the principal towns. But of the larger buildings there is one at Tiumen for the reception of all the ordinary

exiles as they come from Russia, and from which, as already stated, they are distributed over Siberia. At Tobolsk are three hard-labour prisons, with about 1,000 convicts, in which prisoners often spend part of their terms before going further east. The next building of similar dimensions is called the Alexandreffsky central prison, about 50 miles from Irkutsk, where are some 1,500 hard-labour convicts. Continuing east, there were formerly some large hard-labour prisons at Chita and Nertchinsk, tidings from which, in years gone by, have caused many an ear to tingle; but since the Russians have gained the Amur, and many of the mines have passed from Government into private hands, the great bulk of the convicts have been sent further east. At Kara, on the Shilka, for instance, is a large penal colony, where there are upwards of 2,000 convicts living in and about six prisons, the men being supposed to work in the gold-mines. After Kara, the next large colony is on the island of Sakhalin, which represents the utmost bound of Russian penal life. I have said nothing of the prisons in the provinces of Akmolinsk and Semipolatinsk, as I did not go there. There is or was a large prison at Omsk, through which exiles used formerly to pass; but, now their route has been changed, it serves only for local purposes. They have no prisons in these provinces, I believe, of considerable dimensions.

Some of the larger prisons in Siberia, especially those of stone, were not originally built for their present purpose. There are certain features, however, about the others which are more or less common to all. The Siberian prison, like the houses of the Siberian people, is usually built of logs calked with

moss to keep out the cold. Near the principal building, but generally detached, are the kitchen, the bath-house, exercise-yard, stores for provisions, out-houses, etc., and enclosing the whole is a high palisade of wooden poles pointed at the top. From the fact that almost all the new prisons of Europe are built upon the cellular plan, the detained being kept solitary, it appears to have been recognised as a principle that the old method of herding prisoners together is a bad one. The same principle would seem to have been adopted also by Russia, in that the plan of the new house of detention in the capital is in the main cellular. In Siberia, however, the old plan continues, and usually the prisons inside are divided into large rooms or wards, in each of which the principal feature is an inclined wooden plane, resembling that of a guard-room bed, upon which the prisoners sit and lounge by day, and sleep by night. If the room be square, this divan or platform is placed against three of the walls, or, if it be oblong, there may be a passage up the centre, from which the sleeping places ascend to the walls on either side; or, lastly, if the room be very large, there are two platforms meeting like a low gable in the centre of the room, and two others against the walls. Thus space is economised, and as many as 40 or 50 men (once I found 100) are packed in a room. There are usually a few separate cells for political or special offenders, and one or two for punishment.

Connected with the large prisons are usually a hospital, one or more chapels, sometimes a school-room, and a few workshops.

The large rooms or wards have little or no furniture. Each is provided with an *ikon*, or sacred picture, and

sometimes with a shelf on which the inmates may put their spoons, combs, and other table and toilet requisites with which they provide themselves.

Concerning the prisoners, it has been already intimated that those belonging to the upper classes are kept apart. There is a further classification in some of the large prisons according to the crimes committed: a room for murderers; a second for forgers and utterers of base money; a third for thieves, and generally two or three for "vagabonds"—that is, not merely for vagrants in the English sense of the word, but generally for persons who have run away from supervision, who have no papers, and can give no good account of themselves.*

The number of persons in Siberian prisons awaiting their trial, or the confirmation of their sentences, is very considerable. This leads me to speak of the

* Some statistics with which we were favoured from Kansk for the previous year, 1878, give interesting facts, showing the ages of criminals when they committed their crimes, their education, condition as to marriage, religion, place of birth, and also their repetition of crimes. It should be borne in mind, however, that the figures refer only to a small district of Eastern Siberia, an *okrug* or circle, 200 miles in diameter, and with a population of 40,000. They are therefore primarily of local value, though in their general aspects they are highly suggestive. The number of criminals was 121 male and 61 female: in all, 182. Of these there were 31 from 17 to 21 years of age; 83 from 21 to 33; 45 from 38 to 45; and 33 from 45 to 70. The figures, too, show curiously enough that up to the age of 33 the proportion of male criminals is largely in excess of the females, but that after that age this order is reversed, and the proportion of female prisoners preponderates over that of the males. Of the entire number, 182, not one is marked "well educated," only 46 could read and write, and 136 could do neither; 129 out of 182 were married, leaving 53 widows, bachelors, and spinsters. With respect to religious profession, they were classified thus: 112 were orthodox Russians, and 19 of other Christian denominations; 34 were Jews, and 17 of other non-Christian religions: 180 were born in the province; 22 had offended twice, and 3 had done so thrice.

courts, the judges, and their mode of trial. Since November 20th, 1860, law reforms were begun in Petersburg, Moscow, and Odessa, with their respective districts; and the new method of trial resembles that of England, with a mixture of certain French elements and some local introductions from Russia. Under the new *régime* in European Russia there are three courts, namely: those of the Judge of the Peace; the Assizes; and the Senate. A Judge of the Peace tries civil cases involving interests up to £50, and criminal cases involving a year's punishment or less. Appeal from his decision may be made to a periodical meeting of Judges of the Peace for the district. At the court of Assizes, which consists of from three to nine persons with a president, trial is made by jury. The names of persons liable to serve are put into an urn, from which 36 are drawn by lot. From these the procureur, who is the public prosecutor, may, without assigning any reason, strike off eight, and likewise the prisoner's advocate a greater number, bringing them down to 14. Then, if this jury decide that the prisoner be guilty, the opinion is asked of both procureur and advocate as to what punishment, according to the code, in their opinion should be inflicted; after which the president gives the decision of the court. The Senate is simply a court of appeal—does not re-try cases, but merely judges whether or not in the lower court the law has been rightly administered.

Trial by jury is not yet introduced into Siberia, but offenders are judged by a tribunal consisting of odd numbers, of not more than seven nor less than three. The tribunal is a standing institution, the members of which are paid according to their grade—

from about £70 to £100 a year. A procureur (who is an officer of the Government) prosecutes; and a barrister, retained by the prisoner, defends. Witnesses are called on both sides, and the tribunal decides by a majority of votes whether the prisoner be guilty or not. In case of even numbers being present, or of equal voting, the president has a vote and a half; but should the president be absent, and there be an even number for and against the prisoner, then the defendant in this and all similar cases has the benefit of the doubt. Should a verdict of guilty be returned, the tribunal decides the punishment according to the regulation of the code. In capital or important cases, however, in Siberia, such as murder, the judgment of the tribunal must be confirmed by the Governor-General; and hence, when the vastness of the country is considered, it will be seen why prisoners sometimes wait so long uncondemned. Suppose, for instance, a man commits a murder in a place which happens to be at a distance from the town where a tribunal sits. Some one goes to the authorities, deposes that a murder has been committed, gives evidence in writing, and the culprit is arrested. If the culprit can find bail he may remain free till wanted (in Russia it is enough for this purpose to deposit, as a guarantee of returning, a certain sum of money); but if unable to find bail he must go to prison till he can be sent, suppose, to Nikolaefsk. If it be winter, it would be too costly—the Amur being frozen—to send him by horses; he must therefore wait till the following June for the opening of the navigation. Then, having proceeded to Nikolaefsk, he is tried, perhaps within a week, found guilty, and his punishment determined, after which it is necessary that the

papers concerning his case be sent to the Governor-General at Irkutsk, a distance, there and back, of 5,000 miles; and so the prisoner must wait till his sentence is confirmed. Meanwhile he is supplied with a paper, which is, I presume, his ticket of indictment.*

Whether, when the case is fully ended, the prisoner keeps this or a similar paper, I am not quite sure. I am under the impression that he does, at all events whilst he is on the road to his destination; and, further, that these papers serve as capital on which the prisoners exercise their ingenuity for their mutual convenience. I mean in this fashion: Ivan Nepomnoostchi has a ticket condemning him to five years' labour in the coal-mines of Sakhalin, whilst the ticket of Augustus Poniatowski condemns him for a similar time to the gold-mines of Kara. For reasons best known to themselves, the one prefers country life and a cottage or prison near a wood, whilst the other inclines to a residence at the sea-side. So they change their tickets, their names, and, as far as they can, their beings, and sometimes manage in this way to effect what they wish. I have even heard of prisoners inducing those who are free to exchange places with them, the bargain being effected of course by money, and carried out

* The following is a translation of such a paper, which is divided into six columns, with a printed heading to each, and filled up as follows:—

1. Surname, patronym, Christian name, and occupation of prisoner. (*Gregory, son of Nicholas M——, a peasant.*)
2. Age. (39.)
3. Crime. (*Wrong passport.*)
4. When and by whose order imprisoned. (*On 9 April. Tomsk district police.*)
5. When the case was tried and how it stands. (*Terminated on 4 May, 1879. Now under revision.*)
6. Remarks. (*He begs it may be quickly ended.*)

whilst a gang of several hundreds is marching on to a steamer, for instance, where heads are counted, but where they cannot recognize faces. Goryantchikoff represents the "changing of names" as taking place in the presence of prisoner witnesses, and when several of the party are more or less intoxicated, the price given being sometimes as much as 30 or 40 roubles. All are bound to secrecy by esoteric law, and as the man receiving the money generally spends it quickly in drink and so cannot restore it, he not infrequently finds, when too late, that he has sold his liberty, or exchanged a lighter to receive a heavier punishment for a few glasses of brandy. This is dangerous work, however, for at some of the jails they take down a full description of the prisoners, though they do not usually photograph them, as in England. At Alexandreffsky, for instance, they have a large book, the pages of which are filled with columns headed as follows:—Name, age, crime, and punishment; from whence; appearance; term of punishment; arrival; single or married; religion; date of sentence; from what prison in Russia; remarks, etc.

I am not sure that I have given all the process by which they manage the transfer of tickets, but what is written may perhaps render intelligible the crime charged upon a roomful of prisoners at Irkutsk, who, we were told, had been "changing their names."

The present state of things, however, as regards prisons and exiles, must, as already stated, be regarded as temporary, since the reforms of 1860 have been now extended as far as the Urals, and it is only a question of money when they shall be spread to Siberia also.

CHAPTER VII.

SIBERIAN PRISONS (continued).

Charitable committees.—Prison food.—Clothing.—Work.—Hard labour.—Exercise.—Amusements.—Privileges.—Intercourse with friends.—punishments.—Capital punishment.—Corporal punishment.—Irons.—Prison discipline.—Flogging.—Exceptional severities.

THE Russians introduce or allow the introduction into their prisons of an ameliorating influence, in the form of local committees, for furthering the temporal welfare of the prisoners. "You see," said to me the president of one of these committees, "we have two elements in the government of our prisoners. The police strive for the letter of the law, whilst we strive for kindness to the prisoner." Thus justice and mercy go hand in hand; and when they happen to fall out, I fancy that in Siberia, after their easy-going fashion, mercy not unfrequently wins the day. Whether all prisons have local committees I do not know; but we came in contact with the operations of several. The members take upon themselves to superintend, clothe, and educate the children of prisoners; and in more than one place we found admirable asylums built for this purpose. They also lend a helping hand to prisoners' wives, and at Irkutsk we found they had supplied the prison with a library. Their exertions, however, do not stop here; for they look after and in

some cases improve and augment the prisoners' food. The Government allows for each prisoner so much money a day. At Ekaterineburg, for instance, to the common exiles 10 kopecks; to the upper classes 15 kopecks. At Irkutsk we met an upper-class prisoner who had 17½ kopecks, which he received in money. The prisoners who remain at Ekaterineburg are allowed 6 kopecks a day. Instead, however, of each spending his 6 kopecks, the whole is taken and dispensed by the committee in the purchase for the general caldron of meat, vegetables, etc.; and they somehow manage out of threehalfpence a head to give to each prisoner two dishes of food. Whether the committee appeal to the public for funds I know not. At Tomsk we heard that each director of the prison committee gave his ten roubles annually, whilst from the neighbouring villages were brought presents of flour and other kinds of food. Again, it is common to see, outside prison gates, boxes in which may be placed offerings for the welfare of the prisoners; and such is the liberality of the people in this direction, especially on festivals, that in Petersburg those detained get more Easter eggs than they can eat. All this speaks of kindness on the part of the public towards prisoners, in which particular I know no nation that equals the Russian. Further allusion will be made to this hereafter.

Apart, however, from these philanthropic efforts, the reader will perhaps get a better idea of Siberian prison diet from details which came under our own observation. At Tiumen each man was said to receive daily 2½ lbs. (Russian) of bread, ½ lb. of meat on ordinary days, and ¾ lb. on holidays, with salt, pepper, etc., also a daily allowance of quass for drink. The fare in Tobolsk prison

was the same, a bucketful of quass or small-beer being provided for every ten men. At Nikolaefsk I heard of corned beef and *kash*, or corn, substituted for vegetables. At the Alexandreffsky prison they had ½ lb. of meat, including the bone, and 2½ lbs. of bread. At Kara, however, where the men work in the mines, the allowance is still more liberal. Each receives daily 4 lbs. of bread, 1 lb. of meat, ¼ lb. of buckwheat, with tea, but no quass.* At Kara, when not working, they receive 3 lbs. of bread, ½ lb. of meat, and $\frac{1}{12}$th of a lb. of buckwheat. We found in some of the prisons that, if they do not eat all their food, the prisoners may sell the remainder; or, again, the surplus bread may be used for making quass, which, when given, always comes, I believe, from these "economies." The diet, however, is considerably affected by the rigour with which fast-days are observed in the prisons. Every Wednesday and Friday are fast-days, and there are four great annual fasts, with an aggregate of at least a hundred days, so that there are probably quite half the days in the year when the prisoners get fast diet, which excludes flesh food. I understood, however, that this does not apply to those at hard labour; while other prisoners, during some of the long fasts, receive fish and fish-soup—the latter *ad libitum*. So at least it is at

* If this highest scale of Siberian diet be compared with the highest scale in the prisons of England and Wales, as printed in the Reports of the Commissioners, Inspectors, and others for 1878, it will be found that the English prisoner gets per week of bread 10 lbs. against the Russian 25; the Englishman has 8 oz. of cooked meat and 14 pints of soup against the Russian's 6 lbs. of meat; whilst the Russian has besides 1½ lb. of buckwheat and tea against the Englishman's 5 lbs. of potatoes, 1½ lb. of suet pudding, 14 pints of porridge and cocoa. In fact, the Englishman has per week 17½ lbs. of solid food, 3 pints of soup, 14 pints of porridge and cocoa, whilst the Russian has 33 lbs. of solid food, and tea.

Tobolsk. If a man happens to be in a position to buy tea or such luxuries, he may do so, and his friends may, if they please, bring him food daily. Thus a man ought not to starve in a Siberian prison.

Nor is he left without clothing. Prisoners awaiting their trial, also exiles losing partial rights, may, if they choose, wear their own clothes, or, if they have none suitable, they are supplied by the Government. Those who lose all their rights, however, must wear convicts' clothing. This consists, in summer, of a linen shirt and pair of trousers, and a peasant's coat of camel's hair, a specimen of which last I bought for five shillings. Those condemned to hard labour have two yellow diamond-shaped patches sewn on the back; those without labour have one piece only. Other marks of a similar character indicate the province from which they come. At Kara a coat of felt is given yearly. A shirt must last six months, and is washed once a week; whilst in summer a pair of rough leather shoes or slippers is served out every 22 days. Those working in the mines are provided also with leather gloves.*

Concerning their labour, I seriously avow my belief that in many cases the hardest part of a Siberian prisoner's lot is not the work imposed upon him, but the *absence* of it. This appeared to prevail among the prisoners up to Kara.

* The annual cost of provisions for each prisoner at Kara is 65 roubles and 72¼ kopecks—say £6 10*s*., and for men's clothing 39 roubles 8¾ kopecks, or £4. Women's clothing is rather less expensive, so that the annual cost for food and clothing of men is £10 10*s*., and of women £10. In the new prison at Petersburg my notes give 25 kopecks a day as the cost for each prisoner, 15 kopecks being spent for food. This represents for the year 91 roubles 25 kopecks (rather more than £9), and 54 roubles 75 kopecks (£5 10*s*.) respectively, and excludes, I presume, the item of clothing, since this prison at the capital is for those awaiting trial, and who consequently wear their own clothes.

I met at different places two Poles, who came to the east condemned to hard labour, but who got off exceedingly lightly. What one said amounted to this: that if he liked to work he worked, but if not he let it alone. The authorities told me, in one instance, that they cannot now find enough work for the exiles. Many of the mines have passed from Government into private hands, and some even of those remaining are more or less exhausted. Hence a part of the Russian criminals, who of old would probably have been exiled, are now detained in large prisons in European Russia, such as at Pskof, Wilna, Kharkhof, Orenberg, Simbirsk, Perm, etc.; but the plan has only lessened, not removed, the difficulty of finding useful yet laborious occupation for the condemned. When, therefore, it is remembered that a large number of the criminals cannot read, and that for those who can there has hitherto been, to say the least, but a poor supply of books, the tedium can be easily imagined of imprisonment without work in Siberia. Accordingly, it was little matter for surprise that we heard at Alexandreffsky of prisoners begging for work. In some of the prisons opportunities are afforded for the detained to work, which gives them employment, and also enables them to earn a little money with which to buy comforts. Some, however, are condemned to labour, which labour may be done for the Government direct, or it may be let out by the Government to private persons or companies, as at Kara, where some of the convicts work in private mines belonging to the Emperor, and at Dui in Sakhalin, where the coal-mines are worked by a commercial company.

Thus the work of convicts, when they are put to it,

is mainly of three degrees of severity,—that of the fabric, the zavod, and the mines, which I understand to mean as follows. Fabric work is that of a manufactory, or the labour of ordinary mechanics, such as carpenters, blacksmiths, joiners, shoemakers, tailors, etc. The best Russian prison I have seen of this kind was at Petersburg, on the Wiborg side of the Neva, which had almost the busy hum of a factory, where everything seemed well arranged and kept going; but in the prisons of Tobolsk, which I understood to be of this character, there seemed an insufficient number of workshops in proportion to the number of criminals. The word *zavod* is synonymous with our "works" for the founding and casting of metals; and for this, I presume, is sometimes substituted heavy outdoor or indoor work, such as making bricks, mending roads, or manufacturing salt. But of this class of work we saw next to none, save a handful of men at Alexandreffsky, returning from making bricks. Once more, the mines are of at least three sorts—gold, silver, and coal. The work of the gold-mines resembles the labour of English navvies in making a cutting, whilst that of silver and coal, being underground, is more difficult. From reports I heard, however, of these latter two, it did not appear that the convicts were by any means overworked; but further details upon this matter will be furnished hereafter. Those condemned to the hardest labour need, of course, no special time for exercise. The prisoners without labour are allowed at Alexandreffsky an hour a day for this purpose, which appeared to me too little. More generally, however, we found they had a happy-go-lucky way, especially in the smaller prisons, of opening the doors in the morning, and letting the

prisoners, if they did not misbehave themselves, go in and out of the yard as they liked—to sleep, talk, or bask in the sun, and in some cases to smoke.

I am not aware that the authorities permit the prisoners any amusements, though it has been already intimated that they find them for themselves—sometimes in the shape of cards, with which, if report be true, having nothing else to play for, they gamble away their food.

But we have not yet exhausted the prisoners' privileges. Here are some more of them, though probably they are not the same in all the prisons. According to a convict's behaviour he is placed in a certain category; and the longer he remains therein, and the better he behaves, the more ameliorations he gets. For instance, if a man condemned to fifteen years' hard labour conducts himself well, he serves only thirteen years and two months, and, towards the end of the time, gains certain other privileges. If condemned to wear irons four years, he may, in a similar manner, lessen the time by one-third; if in the higher category, he receives 15 per cent. of what he earns by working for the Government, and in his spare time he may work on his own account; if in the lower category, he earns money, but it is withheld until he advances higher. At Alexandreffsky prisoners may receive money from their friends, up to a rouble a week, but not more. At Kara some prisoners are not allowed thus to receive money, but I heard of others there who receive as much as £15 a year, and who also receive visits once or twice a week from, not mere acquaintances—which is not allowed—but their families, who may also daily, if they please, bring them food

I was told at one large prison that, strictly speaking, it was not permitted to prisoners (except political ones) to write to their friends, which seemed to confirm what I had heard and what I have written elsewhere. But unofficial persons denied this, saying that prisoners are free to write, and this also we heard at some of the prisons. The two statements may perhaps be reconciled thus: that it is one of those cases (and there are many such in Siberian prisons) in which the letter of the law is supposed to be more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

Once more, if men are well behaved, they get, before the expiration of a long sentence, into a position comparatively comfortable. They are allowed to live outside the prison with their wives and families; they may have their house and garden, still working a certain number of hours per day, and obliged to be in their homes by night; but otherwise they are free to do what they list, and are much in the same position as that of an ordinary labourer.

I have yet to speak of punishments, which are of two kinds—those decreed by the civil courts and courts martial, and those subsequently incurred in Siberia. Concerning the former two, it is not quite accurate to say that in Russia there is no capital punishment, since there are at least three offences for which death is the penalty, namely: (1) offences against the persons of the Imperial family, and certain laws concerning them; (2) military crimes, or, what is equivalent, crimes committed when a place is in a state of siege; (3) breaking quarantine laws, such as permitting a vessel with infectious diseases to come into a Russian port. But in these cases culprits are turned over to a military

tribunal, which alone can sentence to death; in accordance with which I was told of a case happening in 1877 in Sakhalin, wherein some convicts, with much brutality, killed a whole family, and were sentenced to be shot; but this is rare, and since the convicts had already lost all rights, it would perhaps be considered hardly an exception to the rule that murder in Russia is not followed by capital punishment.

Nor, again, does the Russian law inflict upon any *free* man corporal punishment. The knout has been abolished for some years. They do, however, put their prisoners in irons, which for the legs weigh from about five to nine pounds English; and if a man rebels, he may get them as heavy as fourteen pounds. I was told, however, that the new chains weigh only five pounds. Those for the wrists weigh two pounds.

As to the period for wearing them, accounts differed. At Alexandreffsky, up to eighteen months usually; at Kara, four years; whilst, at Tobolsk, it was said that prisoners might be in chains from two months to eight years. The manner of carrying the fetters is as follows. Over the leg is worn a coarse woollen stocking, and over that a piece of thick linen cloth; then come the trousers, over which is bound on the shins a pad of leather. A stranger might wonder at first how the trousers could be taken off; and to satisfy our curiosity, a prisoner in Tiumen showed us how it was done, which gave me the opportunity to observe, when his leg was bare, that it had no marks from wearing the irons. On each leg a ring is not locked, but *riveted.* To these rings is attached a chain of about three feet in length, which, for convenience in walking, is usually suspended in the middle by a string from the waist

This may seem severe enough for English ideas of the present day, but I saw heavier on the legs of two murderers in America. Russian chains, however, are playthings compared with some to be seen in Finland, and which I have put on. In bringing the prisoners in Finland from the country districts to the towns, they make use of the farmers' carts; and it sometimes happens that the cart is waylaid by accomplices, and

A FINNISH MURDERER IN TRAVELLING IRONS.

the prisoner delivered. To prevent this, therefore, they in some cases put on an extraordinary suit of irons, which outdo those I saw even in China. First, there is a collar for the neck and a girdle for the body, which two are connected by means of chains, the hands likewise being fastened to the girdle. On each ankle is put an iron stirrup or socket, which projects over the front of the feet far enough to receive through its holes a heavy iron bar, weighing thirty-six pounds,

the whole weight of which is made to rest on the prisoner's insteps and to connect the feet. Then from the middle of the bar comes another chain, fastening it to the girdle. The whole is of iron, and weighs about 108 lbs. It should be added that these are seldom used in Finland, and then only for desperate characters; but in Russia no such chains exist. The heaviest of the Russian irons are about the weight, I imagine, of those formerly in use in England, if one may judge from the pair called "Jack Sheppard's irons," which are kept as a curiosity in Newgate. Moreover, if report be true, there is a good deal of *hocus-pocus* connected with Siberian fetters. To an ordinary observer the fetters look riveted on in such a manner that without a smith it would appear impossible to get them off. The largeness of the rings, however, to allow of their fitting over the stocking, the bandage of linen, the trousers, and then the leather gaiter, will make it probable that, on the removal of these bandages, it may be possible in some cases to slip out the naked foot. However that may be, I heard from another source, not to be doubted, that a certain governor of a province, on visiting one of his prisons, was moved with compassion, and ordered that the chains should be struck off the prisoners; upon which they wriggled and kicked them off with such alacrity as to leave no doubt on his mind that they had been donned as uniform in which to receive his Excellency's visit. A released prisoner has told me that so dexterous do they become in pressing the thumb into the palm of the hand, that they used to slip off their handcuffs and sleep without them. M. Andreoli also mentions in his account that, whilst on

the march, the payment of four roubles to the soldiers in charge got them free of the chain to which they were attached, on the understanding, however, that the guard should not be got into trouble by any one running away, and that the iron should be properly affixed when approaching the town or their resting-place for the night. He also mentions that, in a drove of 147 prisoners, there were 21—that is, a seventh—wearing chains. Throughout Siberia I saw only one man wearing handcuffs; but, in Western Siberia, chains were seen on the legs of many—how many I cannot say, but less, I should think, than a seventh; and this proportion markedly decreased as we proceeded further east.

The courts sometimes order a man—generally one who has run away repeatedly—to be chained, on reaching his destination, to a barrow or implement, which thus always accompanies him wherever he may go. A doctor informed me that he had seen a prisoner's ticket with such a doom thereon within the previous twelve months; and I heard that at Sakhalin one or two ferocious characters were thus confined; but I saw none. There were none, I found on inquiry, among the two thousand at Kara; and such treatment was said to be exceedingly rare.

With regard to punishments inflicted for insubordination to prison authorities, or for subsequent crimes of convicts, the mildest form is incarceration in a solitary cell. A man is next deprived, in part, of food and minor comforts, as in England. Then, if not already in irons, he may have them put on; or, if this do not suffice, he may be "birched," after the fashion in which our fathers corrected us. I witnessed this

performance at Nikolaefsk. Having heard on a Saturday—which is there the day for flogging—that a man was to receive 60 stripes with the rod, I thought it right, since the visitation of prisons was my speciality, to go and see it, and thus shirk no occasion of witnessing with my eyes what I learned through my ears. The man was a released convict, of horrible countenance, who had served his time in confinement, and was subsequently taken as a joiner into a merchant's establishment, and he had rewarded his employer by robbing him. Accordingly, in the police station, he was brought from his room to the presence of the police-master. Behind the culprit stood a Cossack, and at his side a clerk, who read over his sentence. The prisoner then signed the paper, to signify that he had heard it read, and was marched back to another room and placed on the floor, with his back laid bare, one Cossack holding his head and another his feet. Two soldiers then inflicted the stripes successively, whilst a third counted aloud the number administered. The man wriggled and roared, and the skin became very red, but I saw no blood, and the operation was soon over.

I came away, I confess, considerably perturbed; but the Nikolaefsk folks said that was *nothing*, and further informed me that, for the commission of other than very serious offences, they frequently deal in this summary manner with released convicts, both male and female. The switches composing the rod, according to M. Andreoli, must, by law, be sufficiently small to allow of three being passed together into the muzzle of a musket. Those I saw reminded me of a dame's birch, save that they were longer, and the switches somewhat

stouter than those formerly seen in schools—indeed, *facsimiles* of those used in the prison of Cold Bath Fields in London. A marvellous feature of the case is that some of the men (ay, and women too) not only receive the rod, but laugh and are impudent after it. One of my hosts in another town told me that some years ago, soon after the Amur came into the hands of the Russians, he was robbed by a soldier of some clothes, upon which the police-master sentenced the thief to receive 500 stripes with the birch rod; but the governor hearing of it increased the number to 1,100. My host was asked if he were willing to see the stripes inflicted; and, going at five in the morning, he saw 500 administered. As the man lay on the grass, and as each rod was worn out, it was replaced by a new one from a heap lying by. The prosecutor begged that the rest might be remitted, and came away. The whole number, however, were administered, and the man was kept in the hospital for a fortnight, at the end of which time he came to his prosecutor to ask for a glass of grog, and said that for a bottleful of spirits he would not mind having another 1,100 if it might again be followed by a fine time in the hospital!

I heard of others laughing at the birch. But there is yet one thing they fear, and that is a whip called the "*troichatka*," or "*plète*." I forewarn the reader that the treatment of this subject may harrow his feelings; yet, if a writer is to present a true picture of what has come under his observation, he must delineate not only the lights of his picture but the shadows also. The author of "Tom Brown's School Days," when about to describe a fight at Rugby, recommends any of his readers who feel particularly sensitive to skip the

chapter; and I venture to give similar advice with regard to the next few paragraphs.

The knout, as already said, has been abolished for some years, notwithstanding the persistent introduction of this instrument into the pages of some of the vindictive class of writers on Russian affairs. I found it had been discontinued sufficiently long to make it difficult for me to get an explanation of what it used to be like. M. Pietrowski, in his "Story of a Siberian Exile," De Lagny, and one or two other writers of his class, do their very best to invest the knout with every horror, and to make it appear that a long strip of flesh was torn off the culprit's back at every stroke. A more trustworthy account is that of M. Andreoli, which I am the more disposed to believe, because it agrees pretty accurately with the description of the instrument given me by an old man who had seen it used at Chita. The Russian post-drivers still use for their horses what they call a "knout," which is a short whip like a heavy English hunting-whip, only that the lash consists of three or four pieces of twisted hide linked together continuously by metal rings. It makes a formidable instrument even for driving a horse. But on comparing this with our two descriptions, I make no doubt that the genuine knout for criminals was a somewhat similar whip to that now employed sometimes for horses. M. Andreoli gives it a handle from one to two inches in diameter, and 9 inches in length. At the top of the handle is a ring, then a lash of raw hide 18 inches long, with a ring at the end; then a second lash and ring; and thirdly came the part which is the "knout" proper, namely, a flat lash of hard leather, 21 inches long, bent to a curve and

ending with a hook something like the beak of a bird —the entire length of handle and lash being $2\frac{1}{2}$ *arshines*, or nearly 6 feet. The instrument used to be wielded by a convict, who received his liberty or certain privileges for doing this work. I heard from a lawyer that the public flagellator in Moscow was so skilful in the manipulation of his weapon, that he could with it snip a cigarette off a window without breaking the glass, or at a single blow break an inch board, and, therefore, the spine of a man's back. He was said to have found his profession so lucrative that, when his daughter married, he gave her a dowry of 60,000 roubles, at that time equal to, say, £9,000. He made his money from those he flogged. The law demanded that the person to be beaten should receive a certain number of stripes, but did not exact that the recipient should suffer; and thus, when well paid, this hero let the knout fall lightly—so, at least, the story goes.

The "*troichatka*," or "*plète*," is a whip of twisted hide, fastened to a handle 10 inches long and an inch thick. The lash, about the same thickness at the top as the handle, tapers for 12 inches, and then divides in three smaller lashes, 25 inches long, and about the size of the little finger, the whole measuring 4 feet in length, and weighing nearly 15 ounces. M. Pietrowski represents the plète as consisting of "three thongs weighted at the ends with balls of lead." The balls of lead, however, if I mistake not, are a piece of invention to harrow the feelings. At all events, none of those I saw (and I saw a boxful) had anything attached to the lashes, nor did they need it, for the instrument is quite severe enough in itself. From 20 to 50 lashes is the number usually given, though

they may go up to 100. The criminal is bound to a thick board, wide at the top and narrowed towards the bottom, called a *kobyla*, or "mare," which, by means of an iron leg, is made to incline at an angle of about 30 degrees. At the upper end of the board are three places hollowed out to receive in the centre the face and head, and on either side the hands, all which are bound down with leather thongs. A little lower and at either side are two iron loops, which confine the arms, whilst the feet are secured at the bottom. At an execution (for such as described to me by eye-witnesses it almost amounts to) a medical man and some of the authorities must be present. The convict executioner takes three or more plètes, and, having stretched them to render them supple, takes up his position about 10 yards distant, walks quickly to secure a momentum, and brings down the lash with full force on the lower part of the culprit's back. This he repeats two or three times, letting the lash fall in the same place. Then he walks from the other side, so as to bring it down in a different direction, and, after a few strokes, changes his whip and walks from a third point, the strokes thus falling upon the man something in the shape of a star or an asterisk. M. Andreoli intimates that the flagellator is often bribed by the culprit or his friends, in which case he brings down the first blow with terrible severity, making the poor creature writhe and scream horribly, but then diminishes the force of his blows as he proceeds; whereas, if he be not bribed, he begins gently and gradually increases in severity, which is far worse. He has, however, to be wary, for if he does not strike hard enough he is threatened with twenty-

five stripes for himself, which were given the summer before my visit to an executioner in Nikolaefsk. Most descriptions of this punishment represent the culprit's back as raw, and running with blood—and it is better for the man when this is the case. A skilful flagellator draws little or no blood, and more pain is caused when the skin simply rises in wales; but, when this is the case, mortification sometimes sets in, and the prisoner speedily dies. One thus thrashed in the morning had died at night during the week preceding that in which I received my information.

Before passing from this dreadful subject I wish to make quite clear what was told me: that no man for the first offence can, by Russian law, be condemned to corporal punishment. Also I was given to understand, by a legal authority, that the plète exists only at three places in Siberia—Kara, Nikolaefsk, and Sakhalin, (though I was informed by a released exile that he saw it, 15 years ago, at Chita, and nearly everywhere,) so that only the very worst criminals ever see it at all. If they were moderate offenders they would not be so far east, and those who get it have usually gone through deportation, prison, and irons, and yet remain incorrigible. Also it should be remembered that in these localities the inhabitants are few, and are surrounded by hundreds of convicts or ex-convicts; that a very large proportion of the women-servants, and men-servants too, are of the same class, some of them not having even finished their terms; and that, in addition to these ex-prisoners, who are supposed to be corrected and better behaved, a considerable number of the worst characters are constantly escaping. More than 100 escaped from Sakhalin, I was told, the winter before

my visit. When free, they make for Nikolaefsk to escape starvation, caring little what they do. In 1877 three convicts, to get the paltry sum of £12, brutally killed a woman and put her down a well. Hence the inhabitants say that, were they not defended by some very strong deterrents, they would not be safe a moment, since, if a man commit half-a-dozen murders, he knows he is not to be hanged.

I have thus forced myself to mention all the kinds of punishment, painful as some of them are, that came under my observation or to my knowledge in Siberia; and I have done so in part because I desired to leave no room for uneasy suspicions that aught had been kept back from the reader. Moreover, I should not think it right to contradict the many false statements which have appeared from time to time concerning the punishment of Siberian exiles without giving a picture of things as I really found them.

On the whole, my conviction is that, if a Russian exile behaves himself decently well, he may in Siberia be more comfortable than in many, and as comfortable as in most, of the prisons of the world. There are yet other points to be mentioned in connection with Siberian prisons, but these can be best treated of as we visit, in succession, the various towns in which they are situated.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OBI.

Dimensions of river.—Its tributaries.—Province of Tobolsk.—Geographical features.—Population.—Voguls.—Samoyedes.—Intemperance.—Commercial prospects of Obi.—Siberian produce.—Corn land.—Timber.—Cost of provisions.—Carriage.—Discoveries of Wiggins.—Followed by Nordenskjold.—Ship-building at Tiumen.—Navigation of Kara Sea.—Books on basin of Obi.

THE Obi is one of the largest rivers of the Old Continent, and seems destined to play an important part in opening up to commerce the immense wealth of Western Siberia. Something, therefore, should be said of this enormous stream, and the province of Tobolsk through which it flows. The basin of the river contains more than a million and a quarter of square miles; an area nearly 2,000 miles in length, and, at the widest part, 1,200 in breadth.* This vast

* The principal branch of the Obi is the Irtish, which, rising in Mongolia, passes through Lake Zaizang, about 1,720 feet above the sea level. It then passes Ustkammenogorsk, in the Altai region, where it becomes navigable, and, flowing on to Omsk, is subsequently joined by the Ishim and the Tobol, which last is made up of the Isset, Tura, and Tavda, the last three descending from the watershed of the Urals. The Obi proper rises in Siberia, and runs with a rapid course through the northern ridges of the Altai mountains, amid scenery resembling in beauty and grandeur that of the Lake of Lucerne. It is joined north of Tomsk by the Tom and the Tchulim, and then it flows on in a westerly course, swelled by many minor streams, to its junction with the Irtish, on the 60th parallel. Before reaching the Tom the current becomes gentle, and allows of easy navigation, especially in spring, when water is abundant;

area is covered with a network of streams, navigable from the Arctic Ocean to the best parts of Western Siberia, the importance of which can hardly be over-estimated, when it is borne in mind that the success of recent enterprise has demonstrated the possibility of carrying produce by water to Europe.

But let us now speak of the province, inhabitants, and aborigines of Tobolsk, which, though not the largest, is at once the oldest and by far the most populous of the governments of Siberia. It extends from the frozen ocean down to the 55th parallel, a distance of 1,200 miles from north to south, and of 700 miles in its widest part from east to west, its total area covering 800,000 square miles—a country, that is to say, seven times as large as Great Britain and Ireland. The surface, save where the western border approaches the Urals, is flat—so flat, indeed, that Tobolsk, which is 550 miles from the sea, is only 378 feet above its level. It has no large lakes, but there are several small ones, from which salt is obtained.*

but, in approaching the Irtish, shoals become numerous. The Obi then takes a northerly course, and frequently divides as it traverses an alluvial and low plain from 40 to 50 miles wide, the greater part of which, after winter, is inundated. This enormous river, having now a course of 2,700 miles, falls into the Obi Gulf, which is 400 miles long, and from 70 to 80 miles wide. For a large part of the year the water flows under ice, which at Tiumen is from 3 to 4 feet, and on the gulf is 7 feet, thick.

* There are nine uyezds in the province, and among its prominent towns are Turinsk and Tiumen, on the Tura; Kurgan and Yalutorofsk on the Tobol; Ishim, on the river of that name; and Tara, on the Irtish; together with Surgut, Berezov, and Obdorsk, on the Lower Obi; whilst the capital town of the government is Tobolsk. Hoppe's Almanack for 1880 gives the population at 1,102,302, but the Almanack for 1878 gives a smaller number, which represents an earlier census, and is mentioned here only for the purpose of giving the reader some idea of the social position of the inhabitants, who in 1870 were classified thus: hereditary nobles, 404; personally noble, 3,025; ecclesiastical persons (which includes not only all grades of clergy, but also their families), 3,045; a town

Ethnographically considered, the province is not so varied as some others, the people being for the most part Russians, Tatars, Voguls, Ostjaks, or Samoyedes; the Tatars belonging to the Turkish, and the Voguls and Ostjaks to the Finnish stock. Some writers classify the Samoyedes as Finns, but Mr. Howorth considers they should be treated as a race apart. Mr. Rae, in his "Land of the North Wind," and Mr. Seebohm, in his "Siberia in Europe," have recently given interesting information concerning the Samoyedes.

The Voguls inhabit a district which coincides pretty closely with the ridge of the Northern Urals, and were estimated in 1876 at 5,000 in number. Their country makes them hillmen and foresters, for they lie within the northern limit of the fir and birch, in the country of the wolf, the bear, the sable, the glutton, the marten, the beaver, and the elk. They usually dress like the Russians, and live by hunting, for they have no plains for the breeding of cattle, and no climate for agriculture. They are said to use no salt. Their villages are scattered and small, consisting of from four to eight cabins. Obdorsk is their trading town. To this town, on the Arctic circle at the mouth of the Obi, come also the Samoyedes and Ostjaks, of which latter I shall speak as I saw them further east.

The Samoyedes inhabit a larger tract of country, stretching along the shore of the frozen ocean from the north-east corner of Europe, all across the Tobolsk government to the Yenesei, descending to the region of the Ostjaks, and on some parts of the southern border

population of 30,000, and a rural population of 436,000. To this must be added a military force of 50,000, 25 foreigners, and an aboriginal and mixed population of 142,000; the exact total of which then amounted to 666,890.

to Tomsk. With the Samoyedes I felt already in a measure acquainted, partly by correspondence from my friend in Finland, and partly by a near approach to them in 1878, when I travelled to Archangel. Their numbers were estimated, in 1876, at 5,700. Their riches consist of herds of reindeer, which they pasture on the mosses of the vast bogs or *tundras*, from which the animals in winter scrape the snow with their feet, and thus find their sustenance. To the Samoyede the reindeer is everything; when alive, the animal draws his sledge, and, when dead, its flesh is eaten and the skin used for tent and clothing.

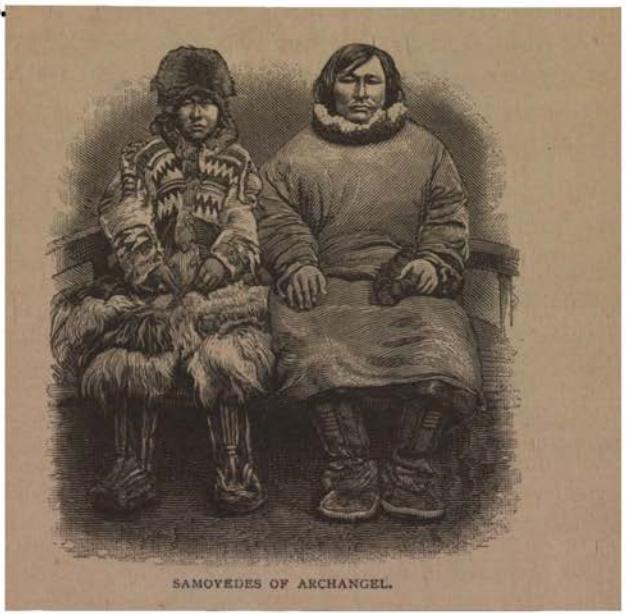
At Archangel I bought a *sovik* or tunic, a cap, and a wonderful pair of Samoyede boots; and as the Samoyede manner of dressing resembles in its main features that of other northern aborigines in Siberia, I may as well describe it particularly. In winter, then, to be in the (Samoyede) fashion, one should dress as follows:—First a pair of short trousers made of softened reindeer skin, fitting tight, and reaching down to the knee. Then stockings of *peshki*, the skin of young fawns, with the hair inwards. Next come the boots, called *poumé leepte*, which means boot-stockings, reaching almost to the thigh, the sole being made of old and hard reindeer hide, the hair pointing forward to diminish the possibility of slipping on the ice or snow. Common boots have the hair only on the outside. Mine are a gay "lady's" pair, lined inside with the softest fur, and made of white reindeer skin without, sewn with stripes of darker skin, and ornamented in front with pieces of coloured cloth. The clothing of the lower limbs being completed, one must work one's way from the bottom to the top of the tunic, or *sovik*, which has an opening to put the

head through, and is furnished with sleeves. Mine has a high straight collar, but in some brought by Mr. Seebohm from the Yenesei this collar rises behind above the top of the head. The costume is completed by a

MY SAMOYEDE DRESS.

cap of reindeer skin, with strings on either side ornamented with pieces of cloth. The hair of the *sovik* is worn outside in fine weather, and inside when it rains; but when prolonged exposure to cold is apprehended, a second garment, called a "*gus*," is worn, with the hair outside, and a close-fitting hood, leaving exposed

only a small portion of the face. The Ostjaks are said to have at the end of the sleeve a glove or mitten, made of the hardest hide of the reindeer, and suitable for heavy work, and also a slit under the wrist to allow of the fingers being put through for finer work. A girdle is worn round the loins, over which the *sovik* laps a little, and thus forms a pocket for small articles.



SAMOYEDES OF ARCHANGEL.

I have been told, by one well acquainted with the Samoyedes, that it is often very difficult to trade with them before giving a glass of *vodka*, and that, when once given, they are irrepressible in clamouring for more. Men may sometimes be seen who have brought in their wares to barter for winter necessaries, and who will exchange the whole for spirits, and reduce themselves to beggary. This has caused the Russian Government to forbid the sale of spirits

in these northern regions, but the traders smuggle them in.*

I must not forget to add that some pleasing accounts of the honesty of the Samoyedes and Ostjaks were related to us. The merchants of Tobolsk, for instance, when they go north in the summer to purchase fish, take with them flour and salt, place them in their summer stations, and, on their return, leave unprotected what remains for the following year. Should a Samoyede pass by and require it, he does not scruple to take what he wants, but he leaves in its place an I.O.U., in the form of a duplicate stick, duly notched, to signify that he is a debtor; and then, in the fishing season, he comes to his creditor, compares the duplicate

* We heard from other sources that for brandy these aborigines will sell everything short of their souls, and even these would appear sometimes to tremble in the balance, if the following story be true :—A Russian priest, it seemed, intent upon adding sheep to his fold, even though by very questionable means, sometimes gave drink to the Samoyedes and Ostjaks, and, when they were in a muddled condition, baptized them, put round their necks the cross, and thus brought them into the fold of the orthodox Russian Church. On coming to their senses they sometimes objected to what had been done, but, like the recruit who took the Queen's shilling, they were caught, and the only way to escape was to bribe the priest to erase their names from his register, and let them go. This was told us by a man who had lived in the Samoyede country. The story presented such a *bathos* of proselytizing zeal, that I asked particularly if it were really true, and was answered in the affirmative. In the time of the Emperor Nicholas, zealous missionary priests received honours and decorations in proportion to the number of Pagans and Jews they baptized; but this, I believe, is not the case now. I heard, further east, of other questionable means taken by a priest to obtain proselytes from the aborigines of the Amur. This, however, was done by one who, during my stay in the town, publicly disgraced his cloth by intemperance. These enormities, therefore, must be laid to the account, not of the Russian Church, but to that of certain of its corrupt officials. They are mentioned here on the principle that not only the truth but the whole truth should be told; and, further, because I would fain not have to allude to the subject when I come hereafter to record better things, as I shall have to do, of the missionary efforts of the Russian Church in Siberia.

stick he has kept with the one he left behind, and discharges his obligation. Captain Wiggins also records that when, in the winter months of 1876-77, his ship the *Thames* was laid up in the Kureika, it was surrounded by hundreds of Ostjaks and other natives, but that nothing was stolen.

The difficulties of educating and Christianizing these wandering tribes are very great.* I heard, however, that in European Russia a priest is sent yearly to a town in the far north of the Archangel province, to baptize the children and marry such among the Samoyedes of that region as are professedly Christian. Reclus, however, speaks of the Yurak-Samoyedes as still practising their bloody rites, and thrusting pieces of raw flesh into the mouths of their idols. In 1877 the Russians opened a school at Obdorsk for the natives. We may hope, therefore, that for them better days are coming, both by reason of what the Russians are doing, and also, possibly and indirectly, by the efforts which certain Englishmen are making to invade the lands of these aborigines for the purposes of trade.

That the commercial value of the basin of the Obi and a large part of Western Siberia is not yet realized by European capitalists is the opinion of most of those that I have met who have been there. A limited

* In 1824 a commencement was made to translate into Samoyede the Gospel of St. Matthew, but it did not go on after 1826. The same gospel was translated some years ago into the language of the Ostjaks by the *protohierea*, or chief priest, at Obdorsk, and was forwarded to the Russian Bible Society, but not published; and, up to the present time, neither that nor any other part of the New Testament exists, as far as I know for the Samoyedes, Ostjaks, or Voguls.—Dr. Latham mentions 11 dialects in the Samoyede language, and refers to the work of Professor Castrén, who, about 30 years ago, studied closely the languages of the Finnish and Samoyede nations, and to whose labours we owe dictionaries of some of these tongues,—published after his death by Schiefner.

demand exists for English merchandise, and the possibility of an almost unlimited supply of products needed by England. The Altai mountains, for instance, are rich in silver, copper, and iron, which last is also

A YURAK-SAMOYEDE.

abundant in the valley of the Tom. But these are as nothing compared with grain, for the production of which the country is admirably fitted. From the southern border of the Tobolsk province, for 600 miles northward, lies a district of fertile black earth; and so

exclusively is it of this character in the valleys of many of the rivers, which overflow like the Nile, and leave a rich deposit, that the geologist finds it difficult to pick up even a few specimen pebbles. It is like a vast tract of garden land, well suited for the production of wheat, oats, linseed, barley, and other cereals. Farther north are prairies for cattle, and a wooded region, inhabited by various fur-bearing animals, where the pine, fir, and birch abound. These remarks apply to the valley of the Obi no less than to that of the Yenesei, where Mr. Seebohm found he could purchase a larch, 60 feet long, 3 feet diameter at the base, and 18 inches at the apex, for a sovereign, and that a hundred such could be had to order in a week. In the city of Tobolsk the cost of provisions, we were told, had advanced to five times what it was 30 years ago; but even so, the present price of meat was quoted at 2*d.*, and rye flour at a halfpenny, per pound.* Again, north of the wooded region come the *tundras*, over

* The surprisingly small cost of provisions on the Obi will be referred to hereafter; but some idea may be formed, for the purposes of trade, of the cheapness of provisions, from the fact that a merchant told me that in 1877 he bought up meat at Tobolsk for less than ½*d.* per English pound, and that, more recently, he sold for the Petersburg market ten thousand brace of black grouse, capercailzie, and hazel grouse at 9*d.* a pair all round. The cost for transporting from Tiumen to Petersburg is as follows: heavy goods, going by land where necessary, and floated on the rivers where possible, take 12 months in transit, and cost about 5*s.* a cwt.; if, however, goods are sent by road to Nijni Novgorod, and thence forwarded by rail, they take 2½ months in transit, and cost up to 12*s.* a cwt.; or, again, if goods are sent "express"—that is, put into large sledges, carrying each from a ton to a ton and a half, placed under charge of a man, and drawn by three horses, to Nijni Novgorod, and thence by rail—the transport costs 18*s.* a cwt. Notwithstanding this heavy cost of carriage, however, the merchants at Tiumen can bring their fish from the mouth of the Obi, forward it to Petersburg, sell the sturgeon at 24*s.*, and the *sterlet*, *nelma*, and *moksun* at 30*s.* the cwt., and then secure a handsome profit for everybody concerned.

which roam the reindeer, wild and tame; and about 100 miles up the Kureika, which flows into the Yenesei, there is a valuable mine of graphite lying on the surface; besides which the rivers are so full of fish that the fishermen try not to catch too many, because of the frequent breaking of their nets.

These riches have long been known to the Siberians, to whom they were practically useless for export, by reason of expensive land carriage over the Urals; and the only other way of transit to Europe was through the Kara Sea, which was supposed to be ice-blocked perpetually. So far back as the sixteenth century, the English and the Dutch tried hard to penetrate the Siberian ocean, but were always stopped at Novaia Zemlia; so that for two centuries no fresh effort was made. Of late years, however, Captain Wiggins, of Sunderland, who, from his youth, appears to have been a bold and adventurous seaman, happened to read in Wrangell's "Polar Sea" that, three centuries ago, the Russians were wont to coast from Archangel, for purposes of trade, to Mangasee, on the Taz, near the gulf of the Obi; and it occurred to him that, if they could do it in their wretched "kotchkies," or boats of planking, fastened to a frame with thongs of leather, and calked with moss, he ought much more easily to be able to do so with the aid of steam. With his characteristic love of adventure, therefore, and at his own expense, he determined to make the attempt; and on June 3rd, 1874, he left Dundee in the *Diana*, a small steamer of only 104 tons. In little more than three weeks the Kara Sea was entered, and found free of ice; and the *Diana* entered the gulf of Obi on the 5th of August —the first sea-going vessel that had ever done so.

Circumstances did not permit of his ascending the river; he returned, therefore, paid off his crew, and employed the winter in making known the feasibility of the route. He found great difficulty, however, in persuading the mercantile world, and applied in vain to the Royal Geographical Society for help to follow up his discoveries. Whereupon there came forward another explorer to snatch the rose from the captain's hand; for Professor Nordenskjold, seeing what Wiggins had done,—amply supported by his Government, by private enterprise, and without cost to himself (as it should be)—followed next year through the Kara Sea, passed the Obi gulf, and entered the Yenesei, from whence, having sent back his ship, he returned overland to Petersburg. The feasibility of the sea-route was now manifest; and, as I passed through Tiumen, Messrs. Wardropper were building, at a distance of 700 miles from the ocean, two sea-going ships, for Messrs. Trapeznikoff and Co., of Moscow, to be floated down the Obi and round the North Cape to England.

It is the opinion of both navigators that "a regular sea communication between Siberia and Northern Europe, during a short season of the year, ought not to be attended with greater risks and dangers than seamen encounter on many other waters now visited by thousands of vessels." These are the sober words of Professor Nordenskjold; and to the same effect are the words spoken publicly by Captain Wiggins, in whom we have a brave and honest seaman, and concerning whose work England need only be ashamed that he received so little support. He has shown, however, by a voyage made in 1878, that steamers of any size, but of shallow draught, can go some 400 miles up the

Obi. On the 2nd of August he left Liverpool in the *Warkworth*, an ordinary steamer of 340 tons net register, chartered through Mr. Wm. Byford, of London, shipbroker, for sole account of Mr. Oswald Cattley, first guild merchant of Petersburg, with a miscellaneous cargo, and arrived in 15 days. He was met by lighters from the Barnaul district, with wheat, flax, etc., to load the steamer, and then convey inland the cargo from Liverpool. No mishap occurred on the outward voyage; but, in consequence of the Obi falling so rapidly, the steamer touched the ground on coming down the river. He arrived safely, however, in London on the 3rd of October; thus occupying two months on the passage out and home. Subsequent trading voyages have been attempted, some of which failed; but the causes of failure were such as may in future be overcome, the *Neptune* of Hamburg having made successful voyages in 1878 and 1880. It appears, then, that the trade only awaits further development,* and if, with specially strengthened steamers, the carriage of produce can thus be arranged between England and Siberia, both countries will doubtless be gainers thereby.†

* For further remarks on the commercial prospects of Western Siberia, see Appendix D.

† There are two books written by scientific explorers of the basin of the Obi, which it may be useful to mention for the sake of any who wish to study this part of Siberia. One is that of Adolph Erman, who, for the purpose of making magnetical observations, travelled in 1828 to Tobolsk, and then descended the river as far as Obdorsk; the second is the German work of Dr. Otto Finsch, who, from Tiumen, ascended the Irtish, in 1876, towards the Altai mountains, and then, turning north to Barnaul and Tomsk, followed the Obi to its mouth. Another class of books, written for the most part by returned exiles, throws more or less light upon Western Siberia, such as "The Exile of Kotzebue," published in 1802, and "Revelations of Siberia," by a banished lady, who spent a short time on the Lower Obi at Beresov.

CHAPTER IX.

TOBOLSK.

Early history of Siberia.—Yermak.—Conquest of the Tatars.—Tobolsk the first capital.—The exiled bell.—Our visit to the Governor.—Hard-labour prisons.—Interior arrangements.—"*Travaux forcés.*"—Testimony of prisoners.—Books presented.

TOBOLSK, for a long period, was the capital of the whole of Siberia. This will be a suitable place, therefore, in which to treat briefly the history of the Russian subjugation of the country at large. It can hardly be said that Siberia was familiar to the Russians before the middle of the sixteenth century ; for, although at an earlier period an expedition had penetrated as far as the Lower Obi, yet its effects were not permanent. Later, Ivan Vassilievitch II. sent a number of troops over the Urals, laid some of the Tatar tribes under tribute, and in 1558 assumed the title of "Lord of Siberia." Kutchum Khan, however, a lineal descendant of Genghis Khan, punished these tribes for their defection, and regained their fealty, and so ended again for a while the result of the Russian expedition. A third invasion, however, was made in a way quite unexpected. Ivan Vassilievitch II. had extended his conquests to the Caspian Sea, and opened commercial relations with Persia; but the merchants and caravans were frequently pillaged by hordes of banditti, called

Don Cossacks, whom the Tsar attacked, killing some and taking prisoner or scattering others. Among the dispersed were 6,000 freebooters, under the command of a chief named Yermak Timofeeff, who made their way to the banks of the Kama, to a settlement at Orel, belonging to one of the Stroganoffs, where they were entertained during a dreary winter, and where Yermak heard of an inviting field of adventure, lying on the other side of the Urals. Thither he determined to try his fortunes, and after an unsuccessful attempt in the summer of 1578, started again with 5,000 men in June of the next year. It was eighteen months before he reached the small town of Tchingi, on the banks of the Tura; by which time his followers had dwindled down, by skirmishes, privation, and fatigue, to 1,500 men. But they were all braves. Before them was Kutchum Khan, prince of the country, already in position, and, with numerous troops, resolved to defend himself to the last. When at length the two armies stood face to face, that of Yermak was further reduced to 500 men, nine-tenths of those who left Orel having perished. A desperate fight ensued, the Tatars were routed, and Yermak pushed on to Sibir, the residence of the Tatar princes. It was a small fortress on the banks of the Irtish, the ruins of which are still standing, and of which I have seen a photograph, if I mistake not, among Mr. Seebohm's collection.

Yermak was now suddenly transformed to a prince, but he had the good sense to see the precariousness of his grandeur, and it became plain that he must seek for assistance. He sent, therefore, fifty of his Cossacks to the Tsar of Muscovy, their chief being adroitly ordered to represent to the Court the progress which

the Russian troops, under the command of Yermak, had made in Siberia, where an extensive empire had been conquered in the name of the Tsar. The Tsar took very kindly to this, pardoned Yermak, and sent him money and assistance. Reinforced by 500 Russians, Yermak multiplied his expeditions, extended his conquests, and was enabled to subdue various insurrections fomented by the conquered Kutchum Khan. In one of these expeditions he laid siege to the small fortress of Kullara, which still belonged to his foe, and by whom it was so bravely defended that Yermak had to retreat. Kutchum Khan stealthily followed the Russians, and, finding them negligently posted on a small island in the Irtish, he forded the river, attacked them by night, and came upon them so suddenly as with comparative ease to cut them to pieces. Yermak perished, but not, it is said, by the sword of the enemy. Having cut his way to the water's edge, he tried to jump into a boat, but, stepping short, he fell into the water, and the weight of his armour carried him to the bottom. Thus perished Yermak Timofeeff, and when the news reached Sibir, the remainder of his followers retired from the fortress, and left the country.

The Court of Moscow, however, sent a body of 300 men, who before long made a fresh incursion, and reached Tchingi almost without opposition. There they built the fort of Tiumen, and re-established the Russian sovereignty. Being soon afterwards reinforced, they extended their operations, and built the fortresses of Tobolsk, Sungur, and Tara, and soon gained for the Tsar all the territory west of the Obi. The stream of conquest then flowed eastward apace. Tomsk was founded in 1604, and became the

Russian head-quarters, whence the Cossacks organized new expeditions. Yeneseisk was founded in 1619, and, eight years afterwards, Krasnoiarsk. Passing the Yenesei, they advanced to the shores of Lake Baikal, and in 1620 attacked and partly conquered the populous nation of the Buriats. Then, turning northwards to the basin of the Lena, they founded Yakutsk in 1632, and made subject, though not without considerable difficulty, the powerful nation of the Yakutes; after which they crossed the Aldan mountains, and in 1639 reached the Sea of Okhotsk. Thus in the span of a single lifetime—70 years—was added to the Russian crown a territory as large as the whole of Europe, whose ancient capital, as I have said, was Tobolsk.

The citadel and upper town stand on a hill, with a precipitous front, at the foot of which lies the lower town. The two are now connected by a winding carriage-road, but formerly the only entrance to the citadel was by a very steep incline through the fortress gates. From the top of the hill an extensive view is obtained of the Irtish, flowing close by the town to its junction with the Tobol. The town below is built with regularity, and contains many churches and monasteries. The houses are chiefly of wood, and the streets are paved with the same material. But the glory of Tobolsk has long been waning, and, when this is the case with a Siberian town, wooden roadways degenerate into a delusion and a snare. They rot and remain unrepaired, and one is in danger at night of tumbling into holes. The population of the town consists mainly of Russians, Tatars, and Germans, and in it are manufactured leather, tallow, soap, tiles, boats, and firearms.

In the upper part of the town are some handsome

churches, and a cathedral, near which is the famous bell from Uglitch, that was exiled by Boris Gudonoff because it gave signal to the insurrectionists. On their being quelled, the unfortunate bell was deposed, had two of its ears broken off, was publicly flogged, and sent to Siberia and forbidden for ever to ring again. But the ban has since been removed, and it now is hung, not in a belfry, but alone, and assists in calling the people to church.

Not far from the fortress are the pleasure-gardens, and also the three hard-labour prisons, which we wished particularly to see. My letter was therefore presented to M. Lisagorsky, the Governor, who immediately sent for the police-master; and we proceeded at once to visit our first hard-labour prisons in Siberia. For many years Tobolsk was a principal place of punishment, and even now prisoners condemned to the east frequently spend here the first portion of their time. On the road we had heard it spoken of as a place of considerable severity, in which were kept those condemned to "travaux forcés." On entering, therefore, I braced my nerves for such horrors as might present themselves. The authorities seemed determined that the prisoners should not harm us (or them?); for, as we moved from ward to ward and section to section, there followed us four soldiers with fixed bayonets. The buildings were large and of brick, with double windows to keep out the cold; and I noticed that, in addition to a pillow and covering, mattresses stuffed with old clothes were also provided for the prisoners. These, I presume, were furnished by the local committee. They had a few books, and as one man only in ten could read, it was usual during

the evenings for these to read aloud to their less instructed fellows. I saw a copy of the "Lives of the Saints" in one room, but no Bibles. The guard-room for the military was furnished much the same as the prisoners' rooms. There were likewise other wards of various sizes: one for murderers, having five occupants (most of whom, we were told, had committed their crimes in fits of drunkenness); another for eight men without passports; and other rooms for thieves. One was occupied by a man who had run away, and another by a man who, for selling things belonging to an altar, had been found guilty of sacrilege.

In the first prison were nine single cells, in one of which was a Polish doctor, a political offender, who had surrounded himself with such small comforts as Polish books, eau-de-Cologne, and cigarettes, which last *he* (by way of privilege) was allowed to smoke. One or two cells were set apart for punishment.

After marching through room after room, corridor after corridor, now across yards with prisoners lolling about, and now through sleeping apartments, where some were not even up, though breakfast-time had long gone by, I began to wonder where the *work* was going on, and asked to be shown the labours of those condemned to "travaux forcés"; upon which we were taken first into a room for wheelwrights, and next into a blacksmith's shop. Then we were introduced to a company of tailors, and another of shoemakers, and last of all we saw a room fitted for joiners or cabinet-makers' work. The amount of labour going on appeared to be exceedingly small, and the number of men employed (or apparently that could be employed) to be only a sprinkling of the 732 inmates in prisons

Nos. 1 and 3, and 264 in prison No. 2. I believe some reason was given why more were not at work, though whether it was a holiday or bathing-day, or what, I forget; but I came to the conclusion that they had not appliances enough to find occupation for 1,000 prisoners, and that one need not have come to Siberia to see the severity of a hard-labour prison, since the same might just as easily have been witnessed in Europe. Had I entered with any of the curiosity that takes people to the chamber of horrors at Madame Tussaud's, such curiosity would certainly have remained ungratified. The prisons of Tobolsk reminded me most of those I had seen in Vienna and Cracow, in which, however, in some respects, a comparison would result in favour of Siberia; for at Cracow the convicts had not only to work at the bench by day, but, if my memory does not fail me, to sleep on it at night. At Tobolsk a set portion of labour is imposed daily; but when this is done, the prisoner is at liberty to work for himself. Various specimens of their handicraft were shown to us.

Prison No. 2 contained criminals who were sentenced to terms ranging from one year to the whole of life, and who, when liberated, were to be sent east to live like colonists. I do not know to whom the credit of superiority is due, whether to the governor of the province, the governor of the prison, or the local committee; but I was struck with the fact when I subsequently asked two prisoners who had been deported across Siberia, as to which prison west of Irkutsk they thought, from their point of view, the best, they both mentioned that of Tobolsk. We left with the governor of this province nearly 500 Scripture portions,

such as copies of the Gospels, Psalms, and the New Testament in Russian, Polish, German, French, and Tatar, together with 400 copies of the illustrated *Russian Workman*, and 1,000 tracts, his Excellency kindly undertaking to distribute the papers and tracts in the schools, and in the best way he could through the province generally, and to place the books for permanent use, not in the libraries, but within reach of each person in every room of every prison, hospital, poor-house, or similar institution under his administration. Having made these arrangements, committed them to paper in the form of a letter, and delivered it to the governor on the Monday evening, we awaited the arrival of the steamer to take us to Tomsk.

CHAPTER X.

FROM TOBOLSK TO TOMSK.

The steamer *Beljetchenko*.—Fellow-passengers.—Card-playing.—Cost of provisions.—Inspection of convicts' barge.—An exile fellow-passenger.—Obi navigation.—The Ostjaks.—Their fisheries.—Feats of archery.—Marriage customs.

THE Siberians are rich in time. Days to them are of little consequence; hours of no moment. With them "Time is *not* money." "What difference," said a coachman at Ekaterineburg to a friend of mine for whom he had lost his train, "what difference one way or other could an hour make, or for that matter *two* hours either?" Moreover, the arrival and departure of steamers are not announced by a.m. and p.m., but the date simply is given; and of course you are expected to be in readiness to start at any moment of the twenty-four hours. We deemed it unsafe, therefore, to sleep at the hotel on Monday night, the 2nd of June, lest we should be left behind; so, getting our tarantass and luggage on the pier, I crept inside the vehicle, and there spent the early part of the night, till, at dawn, the steamer arrived. For a Siberian steamer, the *Beljetchenko*, belonging to Messrs. Kourbatoff and Ignatoff, was good, and her dimensions, compared with others upon which I subsequently travelled, were large. She was a paddle-boat, with

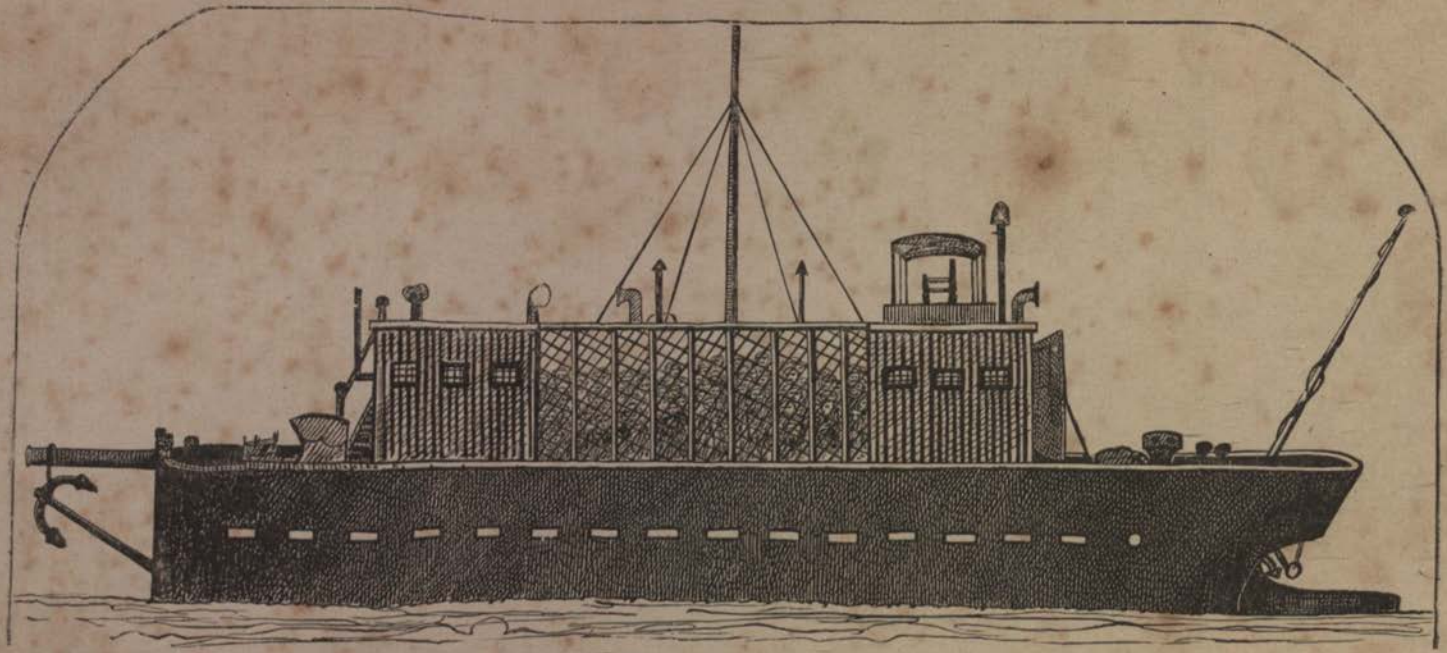
fore-cabins and saloons for first-class passengers, and after-cabins for those of the second class, whilst the deck was allotted to a considerable number of third-class passengers and discharged soldiers who were "homeward bound." All told, the passengers, I should imagine, could not have counted less than from 100 to 150. Among those of the first class were some pleasant people, such as officers of the army, navy, and gendarmerie, and a few school girls going home for summer holidays from Petersburg, a distance of 3,000 miles. There were specimens also of the ubiquitous Russian merchant, travelling on business. Our first impressions of these travellers were unfavourable. Some of the gentlemen were taking leave, if I mistake not, at Tobolsk, of friends, and this event is usually accompanied in Siberia with the drinking of a great deal of wine; so that, when one of the naval officers came to take his place in the sleeping saloon, he was in a condition "unbecoming an officer and a gentleman." We were spared further inconvenience of this kind by the captain, who had received injunctions from one of the proprietors, Mr. Ignatoff, to look after "Mr. Missionary," as the captain insisted upon calling me, and on which I did not undeceive him. For the payment of three second-class fares he gave us for sleeping the second-class ladies' cabin—intended for five persons—in which we were comfortable enough at night, whilst we sat where we pleased by day. The captain was also instructed to charge £2 instead of £4 for the carriage of our tarantass, and also to deal leniently with our heavy excess of baggage and books. As our voyage lasted several days, it was not a matter for surprise that time hung heavily upon the

hands of some of the passengers, but I was hardly prepared for the amount of card-playing with which much of it was killed. In no country that I have visited have I seen a tenth part of the card-playing that I witnessed in Siberia. The Russian Government exercises a monopoly in the manufacture of playing-cards, the profits being applied to the support of the Foundling Hospital at Moscow, and 110 tons of cards are annually carried on the Petersburg-Moscow railway. I am told that the amount of card-playing in European Russia also is very considerable; that there are clubs in Petersburg where the gambling is frightful. As for our fellow-passengers, there was a clique who played by day and quarrelled by night, and sometimes did not leave off their games till seven in the morning. By the time the journey was five days old, £20 had been lost by a young officer, who told me that in the small towns of the interior, in which soldiers are quartered, where there is little congenial society and nothing to do, card-playing is the daily constant resource of the officers. The habit, moreover, is not confined to men, but is indulged in, though apparently in a less degree, by women also. On board the steamer the game was not accompanied by excessive drinking, and, happily, several of the passengers—especially the ladies—spoke French, and a few could read English, so that in their society we passed an agreeable time.

The fares for travelling and the charges for provisions were low. The three second-class tickets for the whole journey of 8 days cost only £4, and for a dinner of 4 or 5 courses—soup, fish, meat, game, and pastry,—only 2*s.* were charged. I remembered this tariff with a sigh in California, where the price was

double for a meal not half so good, with wretched attendance into the bargain. It must be confessed, however, that provisions on the river's bank were extremely cheap—so cheap that one almost hesitates to put it on paper. At Surgut I was offered a pair of ducks for 2½*d.*; 10 brace of *riabchiks*, a sort of grouse about the size of a partridge, cost 1*s.*; a couple of fish called *yass*, weighing, I supposed, 1½ lb. each, were offered for 1½*d.*; and 10 large fish, as a lot, for ¼*d.* each. At Juchova I was offered for 5*d.* a couple of pike, weighing probably 20 lbs., and a live duck for 1¼*d.*; whilst at the villages in the district we passed, which are not easily accessible, a young calf, I was told, could be bought for 6*d.*

As we ploughed along, there was tugged at our stern a barge laden with convicts, to which Dr. Johnson's definition of a ship as "a prison afloat" would with accuracy apply. The barge was a large floating hull, called the *Irtish*, 245 feet long, and 30 feet beam, 11 feet high from the keel to the deck, with a 4-feet water-line. It was made expressly for the transport of convicts, of whom it was intended to carry 800, with 22 officers. Below it was fitted with platforms for sleeping, like those described in the jails, whilst at either end of the craft were deck-houses eight feet high, containing a small hospital, an apothecary's shop, and apartments for the officers and soldiers in charge. The space between the deck-houses was roofed over, and the sides closed by bars and wires, painfully suggestive of a menagerie, or reminding one of the cage-cells in the old jail at Edinburgh. The vessel had neither masts nor engines, and bore a pretty close resemblance to a child's Noah's ark. At one of our



THE "IRTISH," A CONVICT BARGE ON THE OBI.

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stoppages I was trying to make a sketch of this unique craft, when the officer came and invited me to inspect it. We therefore went on board, with hands and pockets full of reading matter for distribution; and if the bars were suggestive of a menagerie, so, I must add, was the mode in which the occupants received our literary food. Not that they were rude, but so delighted were they with the pictures, and so eager to get the papers that contained them, that we found it hard work to hold our own. We had afterwards an opportunity of testing the value in money of this apparent eagerness for reading material. In former years I had always *given* both Scriptures and tracts. This year it was urged, and I think rightly, that it is better, when possible, to sell them. To offer them, however, for money to convicts seemed almost a mockery. Nevertheless we tried it, and requested the officer to let us know how many prisoners would like to give $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ for a copy of the New Testament, or the Book of Psalms. To my surprise he came at a subsequent stopping-place, bringing the money for 44 copies, and said that one man was in such haste to get his book that he had been to him three times to ask for it. As we proceeded on our course, and, looking back, saw the broad keel of the barge ploughing its way after us, one could not help feeling for its strange freight, and the many heavy hearts that were being tugged along further and further from the dear place called "home." But such thoughts received little enlargement at the halting-places, when the barge was drawn up to the bank; for the hilarity thereon of men, women, and children was much more noisy than that of the free people on the steamer. One might have thought that the con-

victs were having a good time of it; and it had been observed to us at Tiumen, as a noteworthy remark, that although, of the 800 prisoners on board, probably 250 would be murderers, nevertheless 20 soldiers would suffice to control them. They had a considerable amount of freedom on the barge, though they could not go, of course, indiscriminately to whatever part of the vessel they pleased.

At one of the halting-places we dropped a Polish exile, a doctor. He was the same man we had seen with his little comforts in the prison at Tobolsk. He was not on the barge, but travelled, as such prisoners usually do, on the steamer, as a second-class passenger, in a cabin near ours, with a gendarme who kept him, and who, we had opportunities of observing, never allowed him to go for a moment out of his sight. We had ingratiated ourselves into the gendarme's favour by giving him books, as we had given also to the soldiers, passengers, and all on board, and we wished to chat with the prisoner; but his guard was faithful to his duty, and would not suffer him to be spoken to. When it was time for the prisoner to go on shore, he walked erect out of his cabin, dressed in private clothes, wearing shaded spectacles, and smoking a cigar. But he was landed at a miserable place on the 62nd parallel, where, at the beginning of June, the leaves were not out, and it had not ceased occasionally to snow; at a village where an educated man could, I presume, find little agreeable society or congenial occupation. His hair was already grey, and as he sat upon his little stock of clothes, with the gendarme standing near, and watching our ship as it glided away, we felt we had left him in a sorry place in which to

spend his declining years. We heard that he had a second time incurred punishment, by trying to escape from Nertchinsk. But it was a melancholy illustration of the meaning of Siberian exile.

The distance from Tobolsk to Tomsk by water is 1,600 miles, which we accomplished in 8 days. We overtook more than one freight steamer, but saw few other vessels, and no timber rafts. The banks were low and flat, and houses of rare occurrence. On the second day from Tobolsk we stopped at Samarova, where the Irtish runs into the Obi; and on the third day we stopped at Surgut, a place of 1,200 inhabitants. Three days later we touched at Narim, which has a population of 2,000.

We did not land sufficiently near to any of these towns to allow of a visit, and the steamer picked up and set down few passengers. Herds of half-wild horses were seen from time to time on the prairies. They were not shod, were unfamiliar with the taste of oats, and had in the summer to find their own living. In the winter they are used for the transport of dried and frozen fish. The natives have an ingenious way of catching fish through holes in the ice, especially in the case of the sturgeon, which in winter congregate in muddy hollows in the bed of the river, lying motionless in clusters for the sake of warmth. The Ostjak cuts a hole above them, sets a spring rod, and then forms a number of balls of clay, which he makes red hot and throws into the river below his bait. The heat rouses the sturgeon, which rise, swim up stream, and are caught. There are large fisheries in the gulfs of the Obi and the Taz, where the Russians pay rent for the sandbanks to the Samoyedes, and,

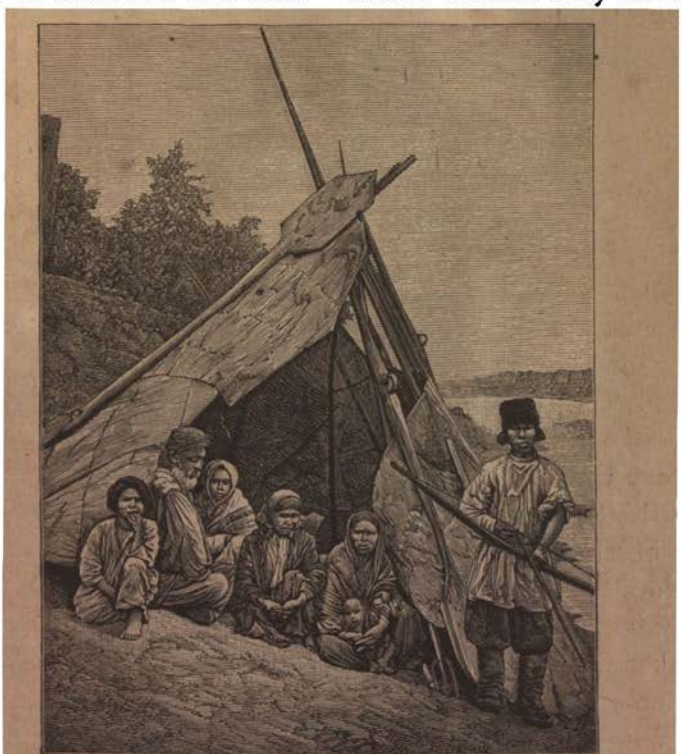
having caught the fish in summer, they put them in ponds till the approach of winter. They are then taken out and frozen, and in this condition sent as *fresh* fish a journey of 2,000 miles to Petersburg.* A large quantity of dried fish is also forwarded from the Obi to the great fair of Nijni Novgorod. Furs and hides likewise are sent there from the northern part of the province, together with rye, barley, oats, and buckwheat from the south.

Nothing, however, that we saw on the banks was more interesting perhaps than the aborigines, especially the Ostjaks, some of whom appeared paddling in their tiny canoes, and stealthily gliding among the bushes as the steamer approached. The Ostjaks inhabit a tract of country on either side of the Irtish and Obi, extending as far north as Obdorsk, on the south to Tobolsk, and nearly as far east as Narim. There is also a territory over which they roam on the left bank of the Yenesei below Turukhansk, though Mr. Howorth thinks that these are miscalled Ostjaks, being really Samoyedes. Their numbers are estimated at 24,000. They have no towns or villages, though they sometimes settle among the Russians. We saw on the banks the frames of some of their *yourts*, or tents, though the people were just then driven by the floods

* The fish of the Obi are generally pike, perch, bleak, and a kind of red mullet, and are of less importance than the migratory fish from the sea. These are chiefly the sturgeon, the *nelma*, and *muksum*, several kinds of salmon, and the herring. In the first weeks of June, when the ice breaks up, they commence their ascent of the river, avoiding the rapid parts, the quick swimmers soon getting ahead of the rest: 30 miles below Obdorsk they form shoals, and have all passed in a week, by which time, 150 miles higher, the quickest salmon arrive. The nelma comes two days later, but the sturgeon not till five days afterwards. Erman reckons this annual migration of fish to be at the lowest computation 26,000,000.

RUSSIANIZED OSTJAKS. *Page* 125.

to higher ground. In the neighbourhood of the Obi they possess no reindeer; their wealth consists of boats, fishing-tackle, clothes, and utensils; and a nomad Ostjak who possesses goods to the value of £10 is deemed a rich man. In this district they have



OSTJAKS ON THE OBI, IN SUMMER YOURT.

ceased to wear their native costume, and are become more or less Russianized; but the Ostjaks of the Yenesei still dress in the costume of their forefathers. These people are short of stature, with dark hair and eyes, and flat faces; in complexion and general appearance those we saw were not much unlike some of the Siberians. They live principally by fishing

and the chase, and are very skilful in the use of the bow. In shooting squirrels, for instance, they use a blunt arrow, and take care to hit the animal on the head, so as not to damage the fur.*

I had heard of these aboriginals, before leaving England, from Miss Alba Hellman in Finland. who thus writes of some of their marriage customs in expressive English: "The Ostjaks are carrying on the most shameless commerce with their daughters. A girl is a valuable thing while she is yet in her parents' home. She then gets all possible care and protection. But is it therefore that she may be a good daughter, wife, or mother? By no means for that cause: an Ostjak father has the same object in his daughter's feeding as he has in feeding his animals. Well fed, she will not long stay at home without the father getting good payment for her. The price of an ordinary wife was at the river Irtish (on the Obi the price is higher), first, from £20 to £30 in money; next, a horse, a cow, and an ox; then from 7 to 10 pieces of clothing; and lastly, a pood of meal, a few hops, and a measure of brandy for the wedding feast. And when a man cannot afford to pay all these things, he often steals the girl. So says Professor Castrén."

* Their bows are 6 feet long, with a diameter of an inch and a quarter in the middle, and are made of a slip of birch joined by fish-glue to a piece of hard pine-wood. The arrows are 4 feet long, the head consisting of either a ball for shooting small fur animals, or an iron spear-like head for killing larger game. The bows are exceedingly powerful, and the archers wear on the left forearm a strong bent plate of horn to deaden the blow of the string. We heard of feats of archery accomplished by them which far outdo the traditional deed of William Tell. Our captain told a lady on board that on one occasion he saw an Ostjak mark an arrow in the middle with a piece of charcoal and discharge it in the air, whilst a second man, before it reached the ground, shot at the descending shaft and struck it on the mark.

CHAPTER XI.

TOMSK.

The province of Tomsk.—The city of Tomsk.—Visit to the Governor.—The prison. — Institution for prisoners' children. — A Lutheran minister.—Finnish colonies in Siberia.—Their pastoral care.—Dissuaded from visiting Minusinsk.—Distribution of Finnish books.—*Détour* to Barnaul.

THE province of Tomsk is, in some respects, the most favoured in Siberia. It is not so huge and unwieldy as some of the others, and does not, like its two neighbours of Tobolsk and Yeneseisk, extend to the Frozen Sea; but, beginning on the 62nd parallel for its northernmost boundary, it continues southward as far as the borders of Mongolia, from which it is separated by the Altai mountains. The climate is good, and the land is valuable for agricultural purposes, while the mountainous districts are exceedingly rich in minerals.*

The city of Tomsk is situated on the river Tom,

It is the most populous province of Siberia after that of Tobolsk, and contains 838,000 inhabitants. Another reference to Hoppe's Almanack shows the vast preponderance of its rural population over that of other provinces, and shows also a large population of the upper classes, many of whom, doubtless, are descendants of noble exiles. In 1875 the number of hereditary nobles in the province was 2,400; ecclesiastical persons, 4,000; town population, 4,400; and rural population, 725,000; whilst the military forces numbered 30,000; foreigners, 48; and the mixed races (chiefly Tatars, Teleuti, and Altai Kalmucs) numbered 130,000, the population being spread over an area of half a million square miles—a

whence it derives its name, and has a population of 30,000. Its streets are wide but steep, and in the centre of the town is a good specimen of that prominent feature in so many Russian towns—a *Gostinnoi Dvor* (bazaar or market). It is an aggregation of shops and open spaces, to which the stranger is constantly sent for anything he may require. If a countrywoman has butter or milk to sell, she takes up her position there; so do hucksters with small wares. Larger establishments are to be found elsewhere, but the *Gostinnoi Dvor* of a Russian town contains a concentration of goods that supplies all wants. Many of the houses at Tomsk are of brick; it boasts of several hotels, two banks, and two photographers. In a distant part of the town is an imposing building, the law courts, etc., also a large church or cathedral, which is still unfinished.

We called upon M. Sooproonenko, the Governor, who was very obliging, and sent us at once to see the two prisons, in one of which criminals are kept, whilst in the other they only stay whilst passing through to their destinations. The condition of prison affairs in Tomsk showed that there was an active local committee. The jail in which criminals are permanently confined is a heavy brick building, with low, vaulted corridors, in which prisoners may be kept for terms varying from one month to four years. The authorities complained that in winter it is damp. This was one of the few prisons where there was a school, which such prisoners as chose might attend; but out of 640, when we

territory bigger than any two countries in Europe except Russia. The government is divided into six uyezds. It has seven prisons and four large hospitals. The principal towns are Barnaul, Kainsk, Biisk, Kuznetsk, Marinsk, Narim, and Tomsk, which last is the capital and residence of the Governor.

were there, only 30 did so. Among those confined was an old man who had been condemned to hard labour further east, but on his way his penalty had been mitigated, and he allowed to stay at Tomsk. There was some little show of work going on in the shoemakers', carpenters', and blacksmiths' shops; but the great mass of the prisoners was herded in rooms where they had nothing to do. When invited by the Governor to point out any defects I had noticed, I mentioned, first, that I thought all should work. He replied that they have no laws to compel them (I presume he spoke of a certain *class* of prisoners), and that the severest punishment they are allowed to inflict is three days' solitude with bread and water. We saw so many prisons in Siberia in which the majority of the prisoners had nothing to do, that the sight became wearisome; and when the authorities told us that they could not find them work, I was vain enough inwardly to say, "It strikes me that *I* could." But on reaching San Francisco, I altered my mind when inspecting a prison managed on modern principles, where they can manufacture in a day more than a thousand doors, to say nothing of hundreds of other articles of wood, leather, iron, and I know not what; and yet, even there, they had men condemned to hard labour twirling their thumbs for want of a job. The difficulty of employing a large number of Siberian convicts is vastly enhanced by the difficulty and the expense of the carriage of raw materials, and the comparatively small demand for manufactured articles.

Our distribution of books was highly appreciated at Tomsk, and one prisoner gave me in return a paper-knife he had made, for which he would accept no money.

In the underground storehouse we saw quass in huge vats worthy of an abbot's cellar, and large receptacles for sour cabbage, of which the Russians make soup. The cabbage is salted in September and pressed, and in ten days is ready for use. The store contained also a large number of tongues, which cost on the spot from 2*d.* to 6*d.* each. In one of the wards, the men who formed the church choir asked permission to sing us a hymn, which they did very creditably.

The most pleasing part of our visit, however, was that made to an adjoining building within the prison grounds—an institution for the children of prisoners and of the poor, which had been built by the local committee. The matron apologized that they were not in holiday trim, but the place was as neat and clean as could be. We called in the afternoon. The girls had an English sewing-machine, and were busy at work, whilst some were embroidering elaborate initials in the corners of handkerchiefs, to the orders of ladies in the town. Some of the boys were learning shoemaking, whilst others were taught to be of use in waiting on the doctors in the prisoners' hospital. Such progress do some of them make that one boy had recently left the school to go to help a doctor at the gold-mines, for which he was to receive his board and lodging, and £30 a year. There are certain funds in connection with the institution, by means of which the girls, on leaving to go out to service, receive various gifts up to about £50; and with this, one of the committee told us, they not unfrequently take away an education which makes them better informed than their Siberian mistresses.

Before we had been many hours in Tomsk we dis-

THE CASTLE PRISON AT WIBORG.

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covered an English lady, with whom and her husband we dined, and who told us that a certain Finnish pastor —Roshier, who had been named to me in my Finnish correspondence—was staying in the town. We therefore sought him out to ask advice concerning the whereabouts and the mode of approach to some of the Finnish colonies which I was anxious to visit.

The reader will perhaps wonder how there come to be Finnish colonies in Siberia at all. Often when a Finnish prisoner is condemned to a certain term of imprisonment in his own country, he petitions the Grand Duke, who is the Emperor of Russia, to send him instead to Siberia as a colonist, and the request is usually granted. I recollect meeting a young man at Wiborg, in the castle prison, in 1874, who told me that, rather than serve for three years as a convict in the town of his birth, he had asked to be allowed to go to Siberia. The Finns do not usually speak Russian. Consequently, on arriving in Siberia, they are quasi-foreigners, and, accordingly, are not scattered hither and thither, but put together in villages with Lithuanian, Esthonian, Lettish, and other convicts from the Baltic provinces. Of this nature are the colonies I wished to visit near Omsk, called Ruschkova and Jelanka, each with 400 inhabitants, and near to which are four villages, bearing the home-names of Riga, Reval, Narva, and Helsingfors. Another colony of a similar kind is Werchne Sujetuk, about 50 miles south of Minusinsk.* Pastor Roshier had been settled there

* Since 1850, it appeared, 541 persons have been sent there, of whom 142 are dead; 20 for fresh crimes were transported further east, and 80 have disappeared—probably run away to live by pilfering and plunder. Some of the last-named possibly have been killed by the Russians and buried; for when the peasants catch men of this kind doing them mischief, so far

for 15 years, and was returning home. The Finnish Government were looking out for one to fill his place, to whom they offered a stipend of £150 per annum; but when I heard from Mr. Roshier that he had not conversed with an educated fellow-countryman for 10 years, that he could speak no Russian, and that his dwelling had been in the midst of convicts only, I was not surprised to hear that the Finnish Government had a difficulty in finding a successor.

For my own part, it had been my intention certainly to turn aside to Werchne Sujetuk, thinking to go across country to Minusinsk, return by raft on the Yenesei, or by road, to Krasnoiarsk, and there await the arrival of the remainder of our luggage—plans which a better knowledge of the country afterwards taught me were visionary indeed. When we did subsequently arrive at Krasnoiarsk, we found persons who, on account of the floods, had been waiting a fortnight to go to Minusinsk.* The remainder, however, of our baggage was not yet come from Tiumen, and could not arrive for a week; so we agreed meanwhile to make a *détour*

off are the courts, and so difficult is the bringing of witnesses, that they take the law into their own hands, and put the malefactors to death. In all, there should be now 547 persons living at Werchne Sujetuk, including 358 Finns. But about 300 live away at the gold-mines, and so it comes to pass that not more than 10 or 12 families reside there regularly.

* Apart from and in addition to these difficulties, however, there were other considerations that dissuaded me from going—such as the small number of Finns I should find, my ignorance of their language, their not being in particular need of books, and the offer of the pastor to enclose mine in a parcel he was sending to the catechist he had left in charge. All this caused me to listen to what proved good advice, and instead of going, I determined to send about a third of my books by the pastor. When further east, I elected to go home through America, consequently another third of my books was sent to the Lutheran pastor at Omsk. Some were left also for the Lutheran pastor at Irkutsk; and I gave the remainder to various prisons and persons for the Finns in the east.

to Barnaul. There we should find a prison, and another in the same direction, at Biisk, to which we could send; priests and people would be benefited by the way; and we hoped to see the Emperor's *usine* for the smelting of gold and silver. This looked more inviting, even though it involved a journey of 700 miles, than loitering at Tomsk for a week. We were now to begin tarantass travelling in earnest, which I think had better be once for all described, partly for the benefit of the uninitiated, who may possibly become Siberian travellers, and partly that the reader may not be wearied hereafter by a too frequent recurrence to the same topic.

CHAPTER XII.

SIBERIAN POSTING.

Travelling by post-horses.—The courier, crown, and ordinary *podorojna*.—The tarantass.—Packing.—Harness.—Horses.—Roads.—Pains and penalties.—Crossing rivers.—Cost.—Speed.—Post-houses.—Meat and drink.

WHEN you purpose to travel "post" in Russia, your first business is to get a *podorojna*, or permit, of which there are three kinds. The first is a "courier's" podorojna, which is used by passengers travelling in hot haste upon important—generally Government—business. Each post-master reserves three horses in case a courier should arrive, in which event only a certain number of minutes is allowed for changing the horses, and away goes the courier at breathless speed. Not long before my visit an exile, condemned to the east, had reached the city of Tomsk, a distance of nearly 3,000 miles from the capital, when, for some reason, his presence was required by the authorities in Petersburg. They telegraphed, therefore, that he was to be brought back *couriersky*; where-

upon he was placed between two gendarmes, and then over the stones they rattled the bones of that unfortunate man, till in 11 days they brought him to his destination. This sort of podorojna is reserved for special messengers and persons of importance; but, after hearing the foregoing story, I came to the conclusion that it is not every one who would appreciate the privilege of travelling couriersky.

Number 2 is a "crown" podorojna, recognised by post-boys who cannot read by its having two seals. This is not paid for, and is usually given to officers and persons on Government service, and sometimes to favoured private individuals. The bearer crosses bridges and ferries free, and need not pay for greasing his wheels; but its great advantage is that, when there is a lack of horses, the owner of a crown podorojna has a preferential claim. Podorojna number 3 is that used by ordinary travellers, for which at the outset you have to pay, by way of tax, a trifling amount per verst, according to the distance you intend to travel.

And now, having secured your podorojna, your next concern is for a vehicle. If you simply take that to which your podorojna entitles you, it will be a roofless, seatless, springless, semi-cylindrical tumbril, mounted on poles which connect two wooden axletrees, and out of this at every station you will have to shift yourself and your baggage. This is called travelling *peri-cladnoi.* From such a fate, gentle reader, may you be delivered! No, better buy a conveyance of your own. The vehicle I have alluded to is called by the general name of *tarantass.* The one you will purchase, though in many respects similar, and by some called also a tarantass, will be dignified by the post-boys with the

appellation of an "equipage." Like the other, it will be mounted on poles for springs, but the axles and body of the carriage will be of iron, and it will have a seat for the driver, and a hood, with a curtain and apron, under which you may sit by day and wherein you can sleep by night. The equipage may cost you from £20 to £30, and, if given to mercantile transactions, you may consider on the way how much you will gain or lose (for that is possible) by the sale of your vehicle at the end of the journey. A third way is to get a vehicle from one who—having come to Tomsk, for instance, to proceed to Russia—wishes his carriage taken back to Irkutsk. It was our good fortune to borrow the two we used, one being kindly lent by Mr. Oswald Cattley.

The packing of the vehicle requires nothing short of a Siberian education. Avoid boxes as you would the plague! The edges and corners will cruelly bruise your back and legs. Choose rather flat portmanteaus and soft bags, and spread them on a layer of hay at the bottom of the tarantass. Then put over them a thin mattress, and next a hearth-rug. When we entered Tiumen, women besieged us with these hearth-rugs, as I thought them. Not knowing what they were for, I could not conceive what they meant by such conduct. Had my companion been a lady, I should have deemed that they thought us on a bridal trip, and about to set up housekeeping. But I was innocent of all such devices, and chased the women away. When it was discovered what the carpets were for, I regretted not having bought one. Next, put at the back of the carriage two or more pillows of the softest down, for which please send on your order in advance, because these

must be bought as opportunity offers. If a housewife has finished the manufacture of a down pillow she wishes to sell, she will bring it into Ekaterineburg to market; but, if you want such a thing on a given day, you may search the town and not get one.

You may now get in, cover your legs with a rug, and watch them harness the horses. Siberian post-horses are sorry objects to look at, but splendid creatures to go. A curry-comb probably never touches their coats; but, under the combined influence of coaxing, scolding, screaming, and whip, they attain a pace which in England would be adjudged as nothing short of "furious driving." They are smaller than English horses, but much hardier, and are driven two, three, four, or even five or more, abreast. The Russian harness is a complicated affair, the most noticeable feature being the *douga*, or arched bow, over the horse's neck. To the foreigner this looks a needless incumbrance, but the Russian declares that it holds the whole concern together. The rods are fastened to the ends of the bow, and the horse's collar in turn to the shafts, so that the collar remains a fixture, against which the horse is obliged to push. The shafts are supported by a saddle and pad on the back, and do not touch the horse's body. The centre horse only is in rods; those on either side, how many soever they be, are called a "pair," and are merely attached by ropes. If you have been wise, you have bought at the *Gostinnoi Dvor* about 20 yards of inch-rope to go all round the back of the vehicle, and to which are attached the two outer horses. The post-men are supposed to supply such a rope, but theirs are often thin and rotten. It is well, too, to take several fathoms of half-inch rope. One of the wheels

may become rickety, and threaten to fall to pieces, in which case the rope will be needed to interlace the spokes. A third supply should be laid in of still smaller cord, in case of spraining a pole or the rods. Do not forget to purchase besides a hatchet. All these we took, and more than all were wanted.

When the driver, or *yemstchik*, has taken his seat, the horses will not stay a minute. Indeed, in some districts, the horses' heads are held while the driver mounts, and, when freed, they start with a bound. And now begin your pains and penalties!

When, at Nijni Tagilsk, we descended by ladders 600 feet into a copper-mine, and came up in the same manner, we were warned that on the following day we should be terribly stiff; but I aver that the consequences were as nothing compared with those of the first day's travelling by tarantass. The roughness of the roads and the lack of springs combine to cause a shaking up, the very remembrance of which is painful. Let the reader imagine himself about to descend a hill at the foot of which is a stream, crossed by a corduroy bridge of poles. The ordinary tarantass has no brake, the two outer horses are in loose harness, and the one in rods has no breeching. The whole weight of the machine, therefore, is thrown on his collar, and the first half of the hill is descended as slowly as may be. But the speed soon increases, first because the rod-horse cannot help it, and next because an impetus is desired to carry you up the opposite hill. All three horses, therefore, begin to pull, and, long before the bridge is reached, you are going at a flying pace, and everybody has to "hold on." The bridge is approached, and now comes the excruciating moment. Most likely

—almost to a certainty—the rain has washed away the earth a good six inches below the first timber of the bridge, against which bump! go your fore-wheels, and thump! go your hind ones; whilst fare and driver are alike shot up high into the air. I have a lively recollection of these ascents, some of which were so high that, when travelling from Archangel to Lake Onega, we had the hood removed, lest our skulls should strike the top. Happily, all roads are not so perilously rough, and, briefly to summarize my experience of them, I should say that those of Tobolsk and Tomsk are muddy, causing the yemstchiks, when possible, to avoid them—to go into lanes and by-ways, over hillocks and fallen timber, and down into holes and ditches, all of which give variety to the route. The Yeneseisk roads deserve nothing but praise; they are well kept, and would be reckoned good in England. The Irkutsk ways deteriorate, and those beyond Baikal are worse than all; for the Buriat yemstchiks drive you furiously over hillocks, rocks, and stones.

Nor are roads the only things to be traversed; there are numerous streams and rivers—some with bridges, but more without. Through some of these your horses simply walk; on others there is a well-kept ferry, upon which you and your carriage are drawn or rowed. On one occasion our vehicle was put on the ferry, and the horses made to swim the stream. It sometimes happens, however, especially in early spring, that the ice or floods have carried away or damaged the ferry, and a flat-bottomed boat is temporarily substituted. In this manner we crossed the Tom. The tarantass was lifted by degrees into the boat, one wheel at a time. The boat was only

just wide enough to take the vehicle, and we were advised to let down the hood, lest the wind should blow us over. This was about the only time I felt nervous, and I confess being thankful when we safely reached the opposite shore.

The cost of these pleasures of travel is not so great in Siberia as might be supposed. In the western division, where pasture is abundant, the hire of each horse is only about a halfpenny per mile. In Eastern Siberia the fare is exactly double. Horses are changed about every ten or fifteen miles, and each new driver looks for a gratuity, euphemistically called "money for *tea*." On the amount of the "tip" depends your speed. Ten kopecks are often given, but we found fifteen put the boys in better humour, and we made from 100 to 130 miles a day. Two hundred versts in a day and night, for summer travelling, is considered good, and we sometimes did it; but given a Russian merchant, bound for a fair, where his early arrival will give him command of the market, and then a "tip" of, say, a rouble a stage will in winter get him over 300 versts, or 200 miles a day. It is common to hear Siberians boast of quick journeys made thus, but they are usually attained only at cruel cost to the horses. The reader may judge what speed can be made from a story told us at Tiumen of a Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, whom the late Emperor, some 12 winters ago, required on an emergency at Petersburg, a distance from Irkutsk of 3,700 miles. The General was put in a bear's skin, wrapped up like a bundle, placed in a sledge, and in 11 days was brought to the capital. Several horses dropped dead on the way, an ear was cut from each as a voucher, and the journey

continued. When governors of provinces travel, they are supplied with the best horses in the villages, and sometimes have them changed at the half stage, so as to spare the animals whilst securing extra speed.

Having said this much about the vehicles, horses, and roads, the reader may wonder how it fares with the traveller in the matters of lodging and board, which brings me to the subject of post-houses. These, like the post-horses, are the property of the Government, and are of very varied quality, from the best—which have all the appearance and the comfort of a roomy, well-established English farm-house or country inn—to the worst, which are little better than hovels. Certain features, however, are common to them all. On one side of the door, as you enter, will be found the room in which the post-folks and their children live, and on the other will be one or more rooms reserved for travelling guests. The guests' room will never contain less than the following articles: a table, a chair, a candlestick, a bed, or rather a bench—padded, if in a good house, but of bare boards in the humbler ones—an *ikon* or sacred picture, a looking-glass, and sundry framed notices. One of these notices is a tariff of meat and drink—not that you are to suppose for a moment that any amount of money would purchase the luxuries named thereon, but the Government makes every post-master take out a victualler's licence, and named thereupon are the prices which he would charge for the delicacies IF HE HAD THEM! No—bed and board are the rub of Siberian travel. You may safely rely upon getting at any station a supply of boiling water, and probably some black bread; but beyond this all is uncertainty. In

Western Siberia milk and eggs are plentiful and cheap—the latter a farthing each; and everywhere, if you arrive at dinner-time, there is a chance of getting some meat, which you may or may not be able to eat. The fact is, you must take your own provisions, and for this winter is better than summer, because then you have simply to freeze your meat and chop off a piece with your hatchet when required. It is easy, moreover, to start with a stock of frozen meat pies, one of which, thrown in hot water, is eatable in a few minutes; and so with lumps of frozen cream. Tea and sugar are carried, of course, by every traveller in Russia; and to these were added a small quantity of tinned meat, fresh butter, anchovy paste, and marmalade—the last two as qualifiers in case we were reduced to black bread. These things, with a stock of white bread taken from the larger towns, formed a base, for which we were thankful. If anything better fell in the way, it was so much to the good; if white bread and butter failed, then we hoped for improved circumstances. These remarks apply, of course, to the hundreds of miles of country between the towns. In the towns we fared comparatively well. Such are some of the features of tarantass travel for which we prepared ourselves at Tomsk. What occurred will be related in its proper place.

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM TOMSK SOUTHWARDS.

Application for horses.—Effect of Petersburg letter.—A false start.—A horse killed.—Attempted cooking.—Siberian weather.—Meteorology.—Scenery.—Trees, plants, and flowers.—An elementary school.—Education in Western Siberia.

THOUGH our journey to Barnaul took place quite early in our posting career, it was by no means devoid of incident. On Thursday, June 12th, we sent for a "troika" of horses at noon, and were coolly told by the postal authorities that we could have them towards midnight. Now the chief of their department at Petersburg had favoured me with a special letter, addressed to the post-masters on our route, enjoining them to help me, and requesting that I might be delayed as little as possible. We had been favoured likewise with a crown podorojna. This latter had been presented, but to no purpose; and it seemed a clear case for bringing our heavy artillery into action. We presented, therefore, the postal letter, and the effect was magical. Before the official had half read it, he sprang to his feet, eyed me respectfully, bustled off to his chief, and, speedily returning, promised the horses in an hour. They appeared punctually, and we started "troika" fashion—that is, three horses driven abreast. Unfortunately, however, the *starosta*, or man in charge

of the postal yard, could not read our podorojna, and he took it for granted that we wished to go towards Krasnoiarsk, and told the yemstchik to drive us thither. Nor was it till we had run some dozen miles or more that it was discovered we were not on the road to Barnaul. We had, of course, to retrace our steps to Tomsk, and then we heard that it was not the first time this starosta had sent off travellers in the wrong direction. The mistake in our case had caused the extra expenditure of eighteen pennyworth of horse-flesh, and I thought it right to visit the loss of this sum on the starosta for the benefit of future travellers as well as our own. I therefore declined to pay for the privilege of having been taken out of our way, and left the starosta to settle with the post-master.

Making a fresh start, we found ourselves by nightfall near the river Tom. The ordinary road was under water, and the banks of the stream were so flooded that we were obliged to take a cross-country road leading some 25 miles out of the way; and as it went over hill and dale, and almost "hedges and ditches," we were advised to stay till morning. But we pushed on, crossed the river at daybreak, and at the third station, in the direction of the Barabinsky steppe, turned southwards, and travelled well till Saturday evening, when, on stopping awhile to rest the horses, one of them dropped and died upon the spot. We were pulling the creature off the road—one having hold of a leg, another of her tail, and so on—when the remaining horses, as if indignant at such conduct, rushed over the bank, and tore away with the tarantass into the forest. Some of us pursued, and fortunately caught and brought them back without further harm.

The loss of a horse is more serious in Eastern than in Western Siberia, where people have herds of horses worthy of patriarchs. One lady told me that her husband possessed from 4,000 to 5,000 horses, and about as many cows. Pasturage is abundant, and horse-flesh is cheap. Our horse was reckoned a good one, and valued at £4 10*s*. The post-master could claim nothing from us for its loss, and thanked us warmly for 10*s*. towards repairing his damage. As we went along we saw large herds of mares with their foals, turned loose for the summer in company with a single horse to guard them. Should danger approach, in the form of a wild beast for instance, the stallion drives all the mares within a circle with their heels outwards, and the foals in the centre, whilst he stamps the ground with rage and dares the wolf to come within reach of their hoofs.

When we reached the last river we had to cross, which at ordinary times was probably not half a mile wide, we found it so flooded that the ferry-boat had a journey of more than five miles. This took a long while, and, when returning, we thought to save time by eating a meal on the water. In my luncheon-basket is a "Rob Roy" cuisine, with a view to the using of which, before leaving England, I took an evening's cooking lesson. I was now anxious to demonstrate to the Russians that it was possible to make a cup of tea without the aid of a *samovar*. We therefore commenced operations, there being on board not only our own three horses, but half-a-dozen others with their drivers and tarantasses. The great advantage of this cuisine is that, whereas a puff of wind may extinguish an ordinary spirit-lamp, the "Rob Roy," by setting fire

to the steam of the spirit, burns so furiously that a hurricane will not blow it out. It makes, however, a considerable roar; and when matters reached this stage, not only were all the natives surprised, but the horses began so to kick and to plunge that we feared an upset. One of the drivers said his horse was 30 years old, and had never heard such a noise in his life! So, for the general safety of all on board, I packed up my kitchen and had to forego the tea.

Hitherto our Siberian tour had been highly enjoyable. South of Tomsk the weather was charming, and the new spring vegetation lovely. A question that has been repeatedly put to me since my return to England is, "Did you not find it very cold in Siberia?" It may be well, therefore, that this question should here be answered. Snow fell on the night we entered the country, and the ground next morning, May 29th, was white; but the snow disappeared after an hour or two, and we saw no more for some days. By the 5th of June we reached on the Obi a latitude 100 miles north of Petersburg, where the buds had not yet opened, nor had the winter floods subsided. I heard subsequently that the opening of spring had come that year unusually early in Petersburg, and exceptionally late in Siberia, where the ice usually breaks up at Tobolsk at the end of April. On the 6th of June we had snow, and the trees on the banks had little verdure till we reached Tomsk on the 9th, after which fine weather set in, and was followed by almost uninterrupted sunshine till the beginning of autumn. The summer climate, therefore, of those parts of Siberia through which I passed I consider

simply delightful—neither oppressively hot by day nor unpleasantly cold by night.

Before leaving England, my neighbour, Mr. Glaisher the meteorologist, had urged me to take a few instruments for the purpose of making observations, and had kindly lent me for the journey a valuable unmounted thermometer. I took, besides, an aneroid barometer, a compass, an anemometer, maximum and minimum thermometers, and two others. With these instruments I felt very much like a boy leaving home on a summer morning with excellent fishing tackle, and bent on taking nothing less than trout. When returning, I felt that I had brought back minnows. On my first night out, at Cologne, my apparatus was duly exposed from the hotel window, and on reaching Petersburg I climbed daily to the top of the hotel to measure the velocity of the wind. At the copper-mine at Nijni Tagilsk I was resolved on being very learned, and took my instruments to test the temperature of springs and the velocity of air currents. But, alas! I broke my thermometer, and, having reached the bottom of the mine, had forgotten, when undressing, to take my watch. On the Obi I was able to take a few observations, but it was impossible to continue this during posting journeys; and further on I broke my minimum thermometer, after which I abandoned hope of attaining meteorological distinction.*

* My scientific attempts brought me in contact with some pleasant people; notably Captain Rykatcheff, of the Observatory in Petersburg, and with others at Moscow, Ekaterineburg, Tomsk, etc.; at all of which places they have observatories, that near Petersburg being, I was told, in some respects better than ours at Greenwich. The Russians take considerable pains in collecting data from 103 stations throughout the

The journey to Barnaul revealed to us beauties of scenery and vegetation for which we were hardly prepared after the flat and leafless districts through which we had been passing. The landscape now became undulating, and the traveller who passes further south to Biisk, and beyond, approaches the regions of the Altai chain, which are spoken of as well worth seeing.*

Empire, of which 14 are in Siberia, namely: at Omsk, Akmolinsk, Semipolatinsk, Tomsk, Barnaul, Kuznetsk, Yeneseisk, Turukhansk, Irkutsk, Kiakhta, Nertchinsk mines, Blagovestchensk, Nikolaefsk, and Vladivostock. The Russians have an observatory also in China, at Peking; and I think I heard of some new ones established on the Obi. They register thrice daily—at seven, one, and nine—the readings of the barometer, the dry and wet bulb thermometers giving the temperature and humidity of the atmosphere, the direction of the wind, and the amount of clouds, rain, snow, etc.; and these statistics are collected and published at Petersburg with a fulness which exceeds, I am told, anything that we do in poor England. I was presented with the Report for 1877 (the last then published)—a great volume of 600 pages. It will be from this source that I shall from time to time air before the reader my meteorological learning. Tomsk was the first of the Siberian stations at which we arrived, where the maximum temperature of the year rose, at one o'clock on the 6th August, to 106°.9, and the minimum temperature, 83°.2 below zero, occurred on Christmas Day. At Barnaul, some 200 miles south, it was a little hotter and a little colder, the maximum being 107°.8, and the minimum 84°.8 below zero. On the Sunday we spent there, June 15th, the temperature was the hottest we had experienced up to that time in Siberia; and we heard it is so cold in winter that small birds sometimes drop dead in the streets.

* The entire Altai system extends in a serpentine line, and under various names, from the Irtish to Behring Strait. The breadth of the chain varies from 400 to 1,000 miles. Its entire length is about 4,500 miles, but it is only to the portion west of Lake Baikal that the term Altai is applied. This part consists of a succession of terraces with swelling outline, descending in steps from the high tableland, and terminating in promontories on the Siberian plains. On these terraces (some of them at great height) are numerous lakes. The ordinary tablelands are given as not more than 6,000 feet high, and as seldom covered with perpetual snow, though it is otherwise with the Korgan tableland, which reaches 9,900 feet; and the two pillars of Katunya, which are said to attain to nearly 13,000 feet above the sea level. At the western extremity of the chain are metalliferous veins, in which several important workings have been established since 1872.

The grass between Tomsk and Barnaul was remarkable, and the further south we went the more luxuriant it became. Much of the flora was familiar, but we were now introduced to a good many trees, shrubs, plants, and flowers, found more or less in the country west of Irkutsk, that were new to us. The most prominent of the trees was the white-barked birch, justly called the "lady of the forest." We saw also the cedar-nut tree, the pitch pine, the larch, the flowering acacia, spruce fir, and alder, the white-pine, willow, lime, Siberian poplar, laburnum, and white-flowering cheriomkha—the last a beautiful object when in blossom, and yielding for fruit a small bird cherry. Among the shrubs appeared the white hawthorn, and an abundance of wild red currants, which, like bird cherries, are eaten by the people—the latter being made into bread and cakes, and, in common with other fruits, put into brandy to make *naliphka.* These fruits are very sour as compared with the English kinds. Strawberry and raspberry plants abounded, though we did not get our first plate of wild strawberries till 11th July. In autumn, numerous berries are plentiful, such as cranberries (called *klukva*), bilberries, cowberries, bearberries, stoneberries, the mountain ash berry, and the Arctic bramble. All these are found, too, in European Russia, north of Petersburg, the last having a blossom like a single rose, a strawberry leaf, and a fruit resembling the English blackberry. In summer, strawberries and raspberries are the best fruits within reach of the Siberian traveller until he reaches the southern region of the Amur. Among the spring flowers we missed (or perhaps overlooked) the pale primrose; but violets are found, also sweet-williams, daisies,

foxgloves, rich camomile flowers, the wild rose, crocus, lily of the valley, and many others. The fields were actually blue with forget-me-nots. We noticed also on this journey what was to me a new plant, bearing an orange flower something like a buttercup, but very much larger, and of which there were many. Also east of Tomsk we saw a large red lily, made much of in English gardens, but which here was growing wild; also, in great abundance, a red flower very much like the peony.

On the road to Barnaul, at a place called Medvedsky, is an elementary school, to which, in returning, we paid a visit, and so were brought into contact with village education.* There were in attendance 32 boys and girls, of ages varying from 6 to 16, most of whom came from distant places (some 30 miles off), and lodged in the village. Only 8 were from the immediate neighbourhood. Adults sometimes attend the school, in which the education is free, the school being supported by the commune or *mîr*. The scholars attend daily

* In the uyezd or district of Tiumen, which is one out of 9 in the province of Tobolsk, there are 24 schools; at Tobolsk we heard of 12 schools more. In the villages about Barnaul there are few schools, but there are some in the district of the mines and the works. In Tomsk are a few upper-class schools, as also at Tobolsk; and we met at Tomsk a school inspector. Further, from the *Golos* of 25th June, 1879 (old style), it appeared that the Russian Government had lately opened a classical school, or *gymnase*, at Omsk; a *real*, or commercial school, at Tomsk; and *pro-gymnases*, or preparatory classical schools for girls, at Tomsk and Barnaul. It was further stated that in 1878 there were in Western Siberia 22 upper-class schools, with an attendance of 3,200 scholars; and that other such schools were asked for at Semipolatinsk, Petropavlofsk, Kainsk, and Barnaul. In Western Siberia, in 1878, 546 schools of a lower class existed, numbering 15,000 scholars, of whom, however, the remarkable preponderance of 13,000 boys over 2,000 girls is startling. The Russians have had schools for some time for Kirghese boys, and they have two also for Kirghese girls; whilst, as observed before, they opened in 1879 a school at Obdorsk for the Ostjaks and Samoyedes.

from 8 o'clock till 2, after which hour some of them learn bookbinding. Sundays and saints' days are holidays, but the children are required to be every Sunday at church. There was a priest in the room giving instruction. I asked the children some Scripture questions, but was poorly answered. Many of the children, however, jumped at the opportunity of purchasing a New Testament for 1¼*d.*, and we left a supply for them. The master wished the boys to be examined in arithmetic, whereupon, among other questions, I asked them, "What two numbers multiplied together make 7?" They knitted their brows as if making a great effort—and even the master's countenance seemed to betray that he thought the question too difficult. All laughed heartily, however, when, on giving it up, I told them that the factors were 7 and 1. The master lived in an adjoining part of the house; and in this far-off place I observed on the wall of the schoolmaster's room, as I had seen on that of one of the prison officials at Tiumen, an English engraving of the portrait of Professor Darwin. The schoolmaster said I was the first Englishman he had seen, gladly purchased some of our books, and thanked us for our visit.

CHAPTER XIV.

BARNAUL.

Situation of town.—Cemetery.—Burial of the dead.—The Emperor's usine.—Visit to Mr. Clark.—Visits to hospital and prison.—A recently-enacted tragedy.—Crime of the district.—Smelting of silver and gold.—Price of land and provisions.—Return to Tomsk.

WE reached Barnaul very early on Sunday morning, having traversed, after leaving the flooded river Obi, a miniature *Sahara*, or desert of sand. Barnaul, like Tobolsk and Tomsk, lies at the foot of a hill. It has 13,000 inhabitants. On the top of the hill is a cemetery, which was the first we had met with; but it did not convey a favourable impression of Siberian burying-places. Indeed, I have not been greatly struck by Russian cemeteries, whether in Europe or in Asia, though on the graves of their emperors the Russians place monuments of considerable taste, which deserve to be placed in the same category with memorials of the departed such as those of Frederick William III. and his Queen at Charlottenburg, or the tomb of Napoleon in the Hotel des Invalides. But it is otherwise, as I have said, with average Russian tombs.*

* In the Russian Church there are five offices for the burial of the dead, namely, two for the laity, and one each for monks, priests, and children. The priest is sent for immediately after death, and performs a service. The rich usually have relays of priests to continue praying so

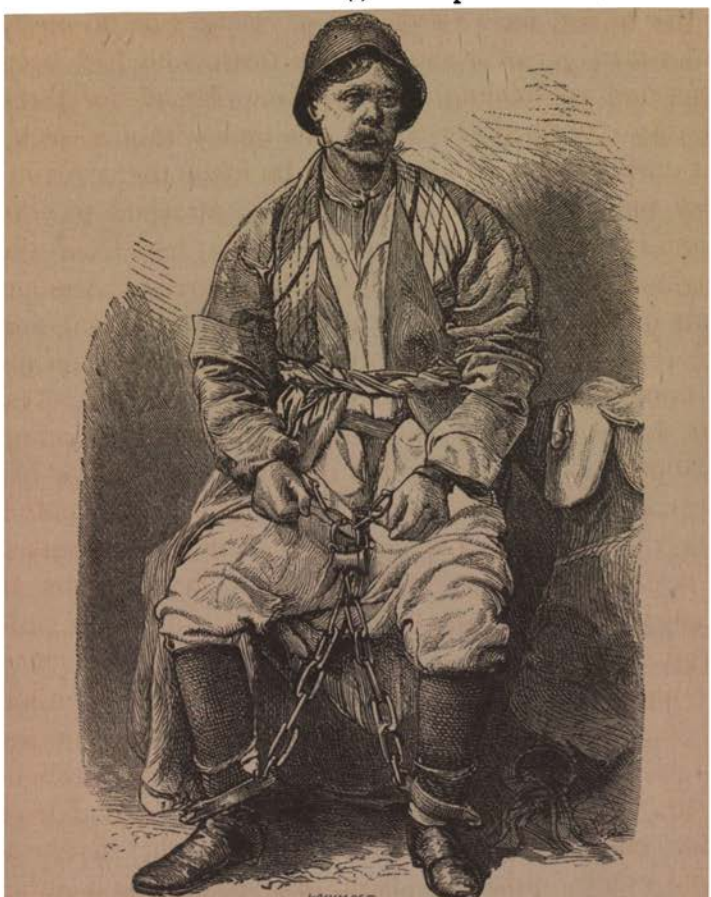
From the cemetery at Barnaul are seen its half-dozen churches and a large building known as the Emperor's *usine*, or gold and silver smelting works. Most of the business of the town is connected with mining; and many surveyors and engineers live in the adjacent mountains in summer, and in Barnaul in winter. The discovery of the precious metals in the Altai regions was made by one of the Demidoffs, who is said to have been sent there by Peter the Great. His monument in brass stands in the public square at Barnaul. We had an introduction to the manager of the usine, Mr. Clark, who is the son of an Englishman, and who reads but does not speak his father's language. We found in his spacious house a good collection of English books, together with copies of the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Graphic*, *All the Year Round*, and the weekly edition of the *Times*. On the Sunday afternoon our host took us to visit the poor-house and the hospital. In this latter were 14 rooms, which had the advantage of being very lofty and airy, though they struck me as not particularly tidy.

In the 9 rooms of the prison were 120 criminals, one of whom, a day or two previously, had within the prison walls enacted a tragedy, the circumstances of which would furnish material for a sensational novel. The rooms of the prison are ranged on either side of

long as the corpse remains in the house. Burials always take place in the morning. The corpse is taken into the church with the face uncovered, looking eastward, and before removal is kissed by the priest and relatives. At the grave the priest casts earth upon it. Further (though this is not ecclesiastically prescribed), the Russians have services for the dead at the grave, or at the church, on the third, the ninth, and the fortieth day, also on the anniversaries of the departed one's death and birthday, the last two being continued for some persons for many years. They do not, however, believe in purgatory.

a wide corridor, and in one of them was a number of women, one of whom had murdered her husband and was condemned to Eastern Siberia, to which she was on her way, though for some reason detained at Barnaul. In one of the male wards was a young man, formerly under-manager of a shop in the town, who had been suspected of stealing, and was imprisoned for three months. He had served out this time within a week; but during his stay in the prison he made the acquaintance of, and became more or less attached to, the murderess, holding conversation with her from the corridor during the time allowed for exercise. Another male prisoner was by these two taken into council, and the three determined to attempt an escape, by means of wooden keys which the men were to make. The plot, however, was discovered, and the woman, finding that she must proceed to her destination and leave her lover, tried to kill herself. But she was prevented. She therefore adopted another plan of ridding herself of life. In the door of the women's chamber was an inspection-hole, unusually large. This she cut a little larger, thrust her head through into the corridor where the man was walking, and begged him, if he loved her, to take her life; upon which he took a knife, cut her throat, and so effectually killed her. We saw the stains of the blood still on the door, for the deed had been done only a day or two before our visit. Close at hand was the prisoner, placed in a separate and rather dark cell, and chained hand and foot—the only man I saw so chained in Siberia. As he walked out of his cell, I walked in, and found on the floor a quantity of cigarettes and a book of songs. Upon my pointing to the cigarettes, the officer said that the prisoners managed

to smuggle them in; and then came out the old story, that this prisoner had managed also to smuggle in drink, under the influence of which he had committed this horrid murder. On asking what punishment he would



CONVICT SUMMER CLOTHING AND CHAINS.

be likely to receive, we were told that he would probably be condemned to hard labour for about 16 years; and we were further informed that in the small district of Barnaul, consisting of less than half the population

of Liverpool, there are usually about 10 murders a year. As we went from room to room, the police-master introduced me to the prisoners as an Englishman travelling through Siberia who had brought them books, which usually elicited an expression of thanks. We left them a New Testament and papers for each room, doing the like also for the hospital and poor-house, and sending a supply for the prison at Biisk.

On Monday we went with Mr. Clark to see the Emperor's usine, to which is brought mineral from Smirnagorsk, 200 miles distant, as well as from other parts of the Altai mountains, where are mines, the ore from which contains for the more part copper and silver. They find there but very little lead. Nor is the quantity of iron worked at all large—chiefly, I believe, for lack of capital and energy. In 1879 only 507 tons of iron were cast, and 238 tons wrought in the government of Tomsk. Many thousand *poods* of copper are obtained annually in the district, but not smelted at Barnaul. These mines are called the private mines of the Emperor, and the revenues belong to the Crown. In them are employed from 1,500 to 2,000 men (not, in this case, convicts), and the ore from the Altai regions is brought to be smelted to four different works for silver, and one for copper.

The smelting of silver is carried on at Barnaul all the year round. They burn charcoal, which costs 10*s.* a ton. The ore as brought from the mine is called *mineral*, and 4,000 tons of mineral yield 2 tons of silver—that is, 2,000 parts of ore yield one part of pure metal.*

* The processes of smelting are three. The mineral is first powdered, and a handful taken to the assaying house. Here we saw a man making

We went from the usine to the museum, which could not fail to be interesting to a mining engineer or a geologist. There was a large and well-assorted collection of minerals; models of the principal Altai silver-mines, showing the shafts, adits, and galleries, with their machinery; models of gold-washing machines, of quartz mills, and of furnaces and works in various parts of Siberia. Among the natural curiosities of the

small crucibles of clay, at the rate of 1,000 a day. In two cups, one having bone in its composition, is put an ascertained quantity of the mineral: both are placed in the furnace, and the result shows what proportion of pure metal the mineral will yield. The powdered mineral is then taken to furnace No. 1, which is like an iron furnace, and from 20 to 30 feet high. Into this the mineral is put with charcoal, and, after remaining there about 12 hours, there comes out of the furnace a black compound of lead and silver called *ruststein*. The ruststein is then placed in furnace No. 2 with lead, and, after remaining there for a short time (three tons, for instance, for an hour), the silver is extracted by the lead, and the compound which comes out is called *werchblei*. This is put into furnace No. 3, where 16 tons would remain three days, with the result that the lead oxydizes into *glot*, and is run off, whilst the silver remains and sinks to the bottom of the furnace. It is then taken out in round cakes from 12 to 15 inches in diameter, and sent to Petersburg. The cakes we saw had a dull hue, very much resembling lumps of newly molten lead, and were valued at £3 6*s*. 8*d*. per pound.

A simpler process is the smelting of gold, carried on in a room about 20 feet square, having a tall furnace in the centre, in which are fires not much larger than those in a laundry copper. The gold is brought to the usine in dust and small nuggets, tied up in leather bags, and begins to arrive from the mines at the end of June. The smelting goes on to the end of October. Some of the leathern bags were shown to us, duly sealed, and with particulars written thereon. One, about the size of a hen's egg, was worth £36; and another, the size of a blackbird's egg, was marked £5. When opened, the gold, just as it comes from the washings, with borax as a flux, is put into an earthenware pot, and then placed in the fire, after which it fuses, and is poured out into an iron mould in the shape of a flat bar. A bar we saw weighed 15 pounds.

In the season they sometimes have in the strong-room 250 poods—say from four to five tons—of gold, which the previous summer had been worth £2,000 a pood, making a total value of £500,000 for gold alone. At the end of the season the silver and gold are sent to the capital, under charge of a military escort.

museum were the stock of a tree, with branches that represented pretty accurately a man in a sitting posture; and a piece of wood, which, when split, had been found to contain a cross inside. In the ethnological department were some good costumes of the Kirghese and of a Tunguse *shaman*, or priest and priestess. They had also in another room an eagle's nest, and several specimens of the Altai eagle; but in the zoological department the most remarkable specimen was the stuffed skin of a tiger killed in the southern part of the district, where this animal is usually unknown.

The price of land and provisions at Barnaul was such as might make many a man sigh to live there. The price for the hire of cleared black soil was $3\frac{1}{2}d.$ an English acre. We saw them scratching the surface of it (for their instrument was so shallow that it was a mockery to call it ploughing), and yet such farming yields there an abundant crop. They take just a little of their stable manure for cucumber beds, but burn the rest to get rid of it, never thinking of putting it on the land; but when they have used a field for a few years, and it is becoming exhausted, they take fresh ground. The cost of provisions in this fertile district is on a level with the prices quoted on the Obi. Black rye flour costs half-a-farthing per English pound; undressed wheat flour, such as we use for brown bread, costs 2*s.* per cwt.; whilst white wheaten flour costs up to 16*s.* for a sack of 180 pounds. The price of meat is similar. In the summer, when it will not keep and is dear, beef costs $1\frac{1}{4}d.$ per lb.; but in winter, when it can be kept in a frozen condition, it sells for less than $\frac{1}{2}d.$ per English pound. Veal is more expensive, and costs $1\frac{1}{2}d.$; whilst aristocratic persons, who live on grouse, have to

pay as much as from 2*d.* to 2½*d.* per brace. In this part of Siberia it is rare to find a peasant without a stock of horses and cows, and a man with a family to help him can make an excellent living. When I wrote, in April 1880, some letters to the *Times* on Siberian prisons, one gentleman said he thought there would be a *rush* thither, because I made things look so comfortable. In case, therefore, the quotation of these prices should tempt any of my readers to emigrate, I think it right to point out that in this district carriage is dear and labour is scarce, a workman earning 1*s.* 3*d.* a day, or, if provided with food, 6*s.* a month.

We should have liked well to have stayed longer in this part of the country, and to have made our way among the hordes south and west, in the provinces of Akmolinsk and Semipolatinsk, which contain a population of 10,000 and 9,000 respectively.* Our time, however, did not permit of our so doing ; and therefore, after a very pleasant stay at Barnaul, and a final lunch

* Dr. Finsch, who travelled with an exploring party up the Irtish in 1876, has put on record much information of a scientific character about this part of Siberia. Mr. Atkinson, an English artist, with his wife, also spent seven years in Central Asia and the Kirghese steppes. He gives fuller information than I have met elsewhere of the Kirghese, who number nearly 1,500,000 souls. They live either in tents or in caverns resembling rabbit burrows, both of which are filthy beyond measure. The appearance of the Kirghese, judging by those I saw in the prisons, is anything but prepossessing—the nose sinks into the face, and the cheeks are large and bloated. They eat chiefly mutton and horse-flesh, and drink tea and mare's milk. The last, when fermented, is called *koumis*, and is kept in the tent in a large leathern sack, said to be never washed out. The Kirghese are splendid horsemen ; and their usual occupation is tending sheep, goats, horses, and camels, of which they possess immense herds Indeed, I was told that, in the *aoul* or encampment of a rich Kirghese chief, one can see in the present day the principal objects that were witnessed 4,000 years ago, when the patriarch Abraham was a dweller in tents, and pastured cattle.

with Mr. Clark, we bade our host adieu, and on Wednesday, June 18th, we re-entered Tomsk, where we found our luggage arrived, and for the carriage of which, by steamer, Mr. Ignatoff—to his liberality be it said—would make no charge. When I added this concession to the reduced rate we had paid on the Obi for our tarantass, our berths, and excess luggage—to say nothing of the personal attention shown on board to "Mr. Missionary,"—and all this without my having breathed a word as to charges, I thought it very handsome, and I gladly record this good deed spontaneously emanating from beneath the double-breasted coat of a Russian merchant.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SIBERIAN CHURCH.

The Russian Church.—Geographical area.—History, doctrines, schisms.—Ecclesiastical divisions of Siberia.—Church committees.—Russian Church services.—Picture-worship.—Vestments.—Liturgy.—Ordination.—Baptism.—Marriage.—Minor services.

IT will be expected, of course, in a journey from the Urals to the Pacific, that something should be said of the Siberian Church, to treat of which is to treat of the Russian Church in Siberia. Wherever the Russians carry their arms, there, like the Romans, they carry their creed; and consequently all along the great Siberian highways, where the Russians dwell, they have their ecclesiastical system as in Europe. I shall therefore speak generally of things concerning the Greek Church, whether in Russia or Siberia, and illustrate them by what I have seen.

Our knowledge of the Russian Church comes to us chiefly from two sources: from the pens of ecclesiastical authors, and from the writings of modern travellers. From the latter, it is not too much to say that the Russians and their religion often receive a scant measure of justice, not to add misrepresentation; for when the British tourist looks upon the gorgeous and elaborate ritual of an Eastern Church, sees the picture-worship of the people, their kissing of relics, and

invocation of saints, he is reminded of like things in the Churches of Italy and Spain, and he not unfrequently condemns both East and West as superstitious and corrupt alike. Such a charge, however, is far too sweeping, and betrays a lack of knowledge of many points which, if more generally known, would certainly bring English Churchmen nearer, at least in sympathy, with members of the Church in Russia. On the other hand, the writings of ecclesiastical authors are usually so technical as to fail in bringing before us what the traveller sees as the everyday religious life of a people. It is desirable to avoid these two extremes, and to distinguish between the recognized standards of a Church's teaching, and the correspondence therewith, or otherwise, of the daily lives of its members.*

I do not propose to enter here upon the history,†

* In connection with this subject, we constantly meet with the terms "Eastern Church," "Greek Church," and "Russian Church." Let us distinguish between them. If on a map of Europe a line be drawn from the White Sea southwards to Petersburg, thence along the western border of Russia to Cracow, then along the eastern and southern frontier of Austria to the Adriatic, this line will roughly divide Christendom between the Churches of the East and of the West. Eastern Christendom is sometimes divided into three main groups of Churches, the *first* group being the Chaldean, the Armenian, the Syrian, the Egyptian, and the Georgian Churches. The second is the *Greek* Church, whose members, speaking the Greek language, are found as far south as the desert of Mount Sinai, through all the coasts and islands in the Levant and the Archipelago, and whose centre is Constantinople. This is the only living representative of the once powerful Church of Constantine, called the "Orthodox Imperial Church." The *third* group of Eastern Churches consists partly of the Sclavonic peoples, found in the provinces of the Lower Danube, Bulgaria, Servia, Wallachia, and Moldavia; and partly, and much more largely, of the Sclavonic people of Russia. The Russian Church, therefore, is an offshoot of the Greek Church of Constantinople, once the centre of Eastern Christianity, which Greek Church, by reason of its former Imperial grandeur, sometimes gives its name to the other Oriental communions.

† *See* Appendix A.

doctrines,* or schisms† of the Russian Church, but proceed to observe that, for ecclesiastical purposes, Siberia is divided into six dioceses, presided over by 7 bishops. It contains 1,515 churches and 1,509 clergy; 14 monasteries containing 147 monks, and 4 nunneries containing 62 nuns. Russian dioceses are subdivided into rural deaneries, each consisting of a circle of from ten to thirty parishes, some of which, in Siberia, must be very extensive, though not necessarily populous. A priest near Tobolsk, however, told me that he had 5,000 parishioners; another at Kansk, near Irkutsk, had 2,000, widely scattered; whilst on the Siberian coast of the Pacific, Nikolaefsk and Vladivostock, towns of 3,000 and 5,000 inhabitants respectively, form only one parish each. Every *selo* or town of a certain grade has a church; and in some of the *derevni*, or villages, churches and small chapels, or oratories, are built, in which latter, services, other than the liturgy or holy communion, may be performed. The churches and vestments are furnished and kept in repair by parochial committees, of not less than five persons, elected annually, who, on retiring from office, are called "church elders." They visit every house in the parish, and determine what proportion of the expenses should be paid by each householder. There would seem to be no difficulty in raising the necessary funds; and I must add that I was agreeably surprised in Siberia to see how well and how clean the churches were kept, even in the remotest and most out-of-the-way places.‡

* *See* Appendix B. † *See* Appendix C.

‡ Besides this parish church committee, there was formerly, and may be now in some instances, in large towns, a "directory," consisting of about four members. In each diocese there is a "consistory," of from

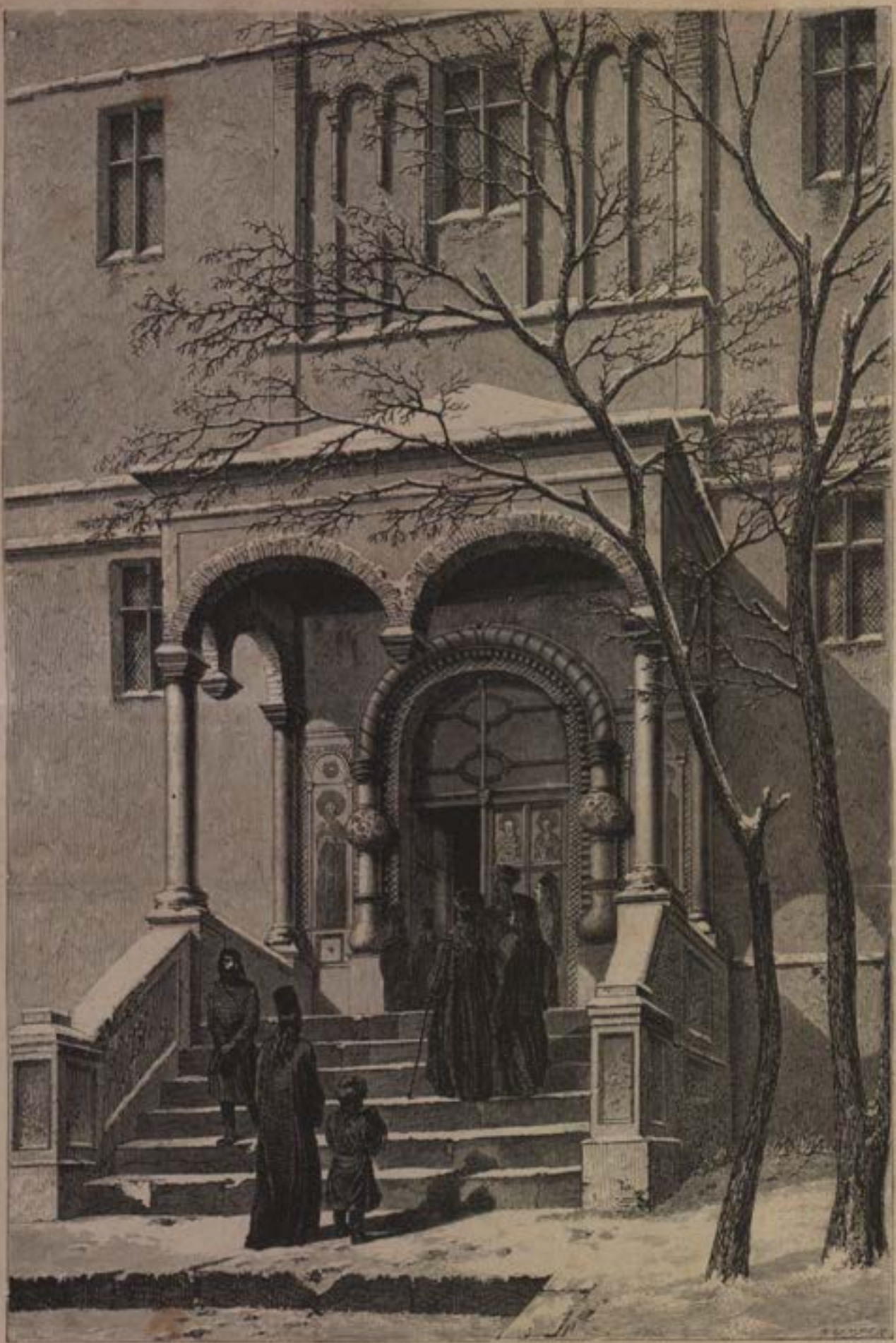
We had several opportunities, in passing through Siberia, of attending the Church services. Picture-worship is an almost universal attendant of Russian devotion—more so, if possible, than in Roman countries; and the Russian Church has found it necessary to issue many warnings against the perils of idolatry.*

Another prominent feature of "orthodox" worship is the plentiful use of lighted candles bought at the church entrance. In one church in Petersburg, and that not the largest, I was told that money is taken yearly for candles up to 10,000 roubles—say £1,000.

The vestments of the priests and bishops are gorgeous in the extreme. A metropolitan's "*sakkos*" is shown at Moscow, which is said to weigh 50 pounds, by reason of the pearls and gems with which it is embellished. At the Troitza monastery are fifteen dresses for the Archimandrite, one of which, for the mere making, cost the Empress Elizabeth £600, the robe itself being valued at £11,000. This monastery is said to possess amongst its treasures two bushels of

five to seven members, presided over by the bishop, the whole being under the synod. Appeals, therefore, lie from the directories (where they exist) to the consistory, from the consistory to the bishop, and from the bishop to the synod. The synod, which has equal civil rank with the senate, and the ecclesiastical rank of a patriarch, consists of bishops and priests, whose nomination, appointment, and length of membership depend on the will of the Sovereign. There sits also with them a lay procurator, who is the crown representative, and who has a *veto* which can be reversed only by appeal to the Emperor.

* The "orthodox" Church draws a nice distinction between the unlawfulness of using in church an image proper, and the lawfulness of using the same image if carved on a flat surface; but the ordinary observer, who beholds people in an Eastern Church bowing down before graven images and likenesses of things that are in heaven and in earth, must find it exceedingly difficult to determine where reverence ends and idolatry begins.



ENTRANCE TO TROITZA MONASTERY.

Page 164.

pearls, and, from what I have twice seen there, I am inclined to add an estimated *pint* of diamonds, to say nothing of emeralds, rubies, and sapphires innumerable!

The Church services are of a monastic character, long and tedious, read in Sclavonic, "which is to the modern Russian," it is said, "about what the language of Chaucer is to us"; so that, what with its ancient form and the rapidity with which the ecclesiastical language is read, it is practically unintelligible to many of the people. From time to time in the services commemorations are made of the Virgin and saints; and prayers are offered to them, blessings are asked of God through their intercessions, and the response, *Gospodi Pomilui*, "Lord, have mercy!" is uttered thirty, forty, fifty times or more, almost at a breath.

No instrumental music is allowed in the Russian Church; but the singing in large cathedrals, such as St. Isaac's at Petersburg (where they have 30 choristers dressed in blue and gold tunics), is exceedingly grand. I do not remember to have heard elsewhere such extraordinary harmony. The basses descended to depths almost abyssmal, and the trebles soared to and were sustained at a height perfectly marvellous, whilst other voices were so profusely blended that I can compare the effect of the whole to nothing better than to an exquisite colored window. The hymn called "The Cherubim," with music by Bortnyanski, I heard sung at Petersburg and Kasan; and at the latter place was not surprised to see tears falling from the eyes of a peasant woman near me, for my own were uncommonly moist. I made bold to approach and look over the music of one of the choristers, thereby alarming the Monk director, who, mistaking my interest, said after-

wards he thought I had perchance come from the Imperial choir to take away some of his best voices.

The ritual and services of the Russian Church are contained in twenty volumes folio. The greatest part of the service varies every day in the year except in the Liturgy, where the greater part is fixed.*

As we passed through Kasan we happened to see the ordination of a priest and a deacon, which was interesting. Holy orders are regarded by the Russian Church as a sacrament or mystery, but are not indelible. If, for instance, a widower priest wishes to marry again, he can do so by resigning his priest's orders and taking some inferior place among the minor orders, or by giving up his ecclesiastical profession altogether. They have five orders, namely, bishop, priest, deacon, sub-deacon, and reader; and the episcopal dignitaries consist of metropolitans, archbishops, and bishops, some of which latter are suffragans.†

* This Liturgy (which in the Greek Church always means the office for the Holy Communion, and is the ordinary morning service) is divided into three parts, namely, "the offering," during which the bread and wine are offered by the people, and prepared by the priest; "the liturgy of the catechumens," during which the Epistle and Gospel are read; and "the liturgy of the faithful," during which the elements are administered. The priest and deacon receive the bread and wine separately, as with us; the laity receive bread and wine mixed together from a spoon, and standing; whilst to infants wine only is administered, for fear of ejection. The priest receives daily, the devout quarterly or oftener, and every one by *law* yearly.

† Each of the five orders has a separate ordination. At the ordination of a *reader*, he is clothed with a vestment called a *stichárion*; and the bishop among other things says to him, "Son, . . . it is your duty daily to study the Holy Scriptures, and to endeavour to make such proficiency therein that those who hear you may receive edification." A *sub-deacon*, on ordination, wears an *orárion*, like an English stole, girded crosswise over his shoulders. The bishop puts a towel also on the left shoulder of the newly ordained, and delivers him a basin and ewer, in which the bishop washes his hands. A *deacon*, when ordained, kisses the four

The services connected with baptism in the Russian Church were formerly very numerous, though now they are frequently more or less combined ;* one principal difference in *practice* between the Greek and English Churches being that the former *always* baptizes by immersion. The child is usually named after one of the saints in the Russian calendar, the yearly recurrence of whose festival constitutes the person's "name's-day." This is observed in Russia more than the "birth-day," which practice has the advantage that if the Christian

corners of the holy table, the bishop's hands and shoulder, and the part of his garment called the *epigonation.* He kneels on his right knee, lays his hands crosswise on the holy table, and puts his forehead between his hands. The bishop's *omophorion,* or pall, is placed on his head, the stole on his left shoulder, and he is presented with sleeves or cuffs, and a fan with which to fan the sacramental elements. When ordained *priest,* the stole is exchanged for a similar vestment, called an *epitrachelion,* and there are also added a *phelonion* and a girdle.

The consecration, however, of a *bishop* is much more elaborate. He is called upon to confess the Nicene Creed. He anathematizes sundry heretics in particular, and all of them in general; confesses the Virgin Mary to be properly and truly the mother of God; and prays that she may be his helper, his preserver, and protectress all the days of his life. He promises to preserve his flock from the errors of the Latin Church; declares that he has not paid money for the dignity about to be conferred upon him; promises not to go into other dioceses without permission, nor to ordain more than one priest and one deacon at the same service; further, that he will yearly, or at least biennially, visit and inspect his flock; and among other things take care that the homage due to God be not transferred to holy images. He puts on his sakkos and other episcopal garments; and there is delivered to him the *panagion,* or jewel, for the neck; *mantyas,* or ordinary cloak; the cowl, mitre, rosary, and pastoral staff; after which he walks to his house attended by two of the superior clergy.

* 1. On the day of delivery the priest goes to the house, and prays for mother and child; 2, on the eighth day the child should be taken to church to receive its name; and 3, on the fortieth day it should be taken by the mother to be received into the Church, according to the service for the reception of catechumens. In the course of this service the priest breathes in the catechumen's face, pronounces three exorcisms, calls upon the catechumen or his sponsor to blow and spit upon Satan, which he

name of a friend is familiar, one always knows when to congratulate him.

Marriage is counted one of the sacraments or mysteries of the Greek Church, but virginity is taught to be better than wedlock. Priests are commanded, under pain of degradation, not to join in wedlock persons of unsuitable ages, nor those ignorant of the essential articles of the faith, and in no case without due notice given. The Russian Church fixes the age of majority for the bridegroom at twenty-one, or, by permission of parents, as early as eighteen, and sixteen for the bride; it frowns on second and third marriages, and forbids fourth marriages altogether.*

essays to do, not metaphorically, but visibly; after which follows, 4, the administration of baptism, when the candidate is first anointed with oil, then completely immersed three times, then clothed by the priest with a white garment, and a cross is suspended on the neck. Immediately after the baptism follows, 5, confirmation, or anointing of the baptized with chrism on the forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth, ears, breast, hands, and feet, with the words repeated each time, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Ghost." Prayers are offered, an Epistle and Gospel read, and the benediction pronounced. Eight days after, the candidate is brought again to the church for, 6, the ablution of the chrism. The priest looses the candidate's clothes and girdle, and with a sponge washes the parts that have been anointed; after which follows the last part of the service, namely, 7, the tonsure, in which the priest cuts the hair of the newly baptized in the form of a cross, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

* The marriage service consists of two distinct offices, which are performed at the same time. The first is called the "Betrothal," when rings are given and exchanged; the second is the "Coronation," in which the bride and bridegroom are crowned, and are thrice given wine to drink from a common cup, and thrice led round a lectern on which lie the Gospels. Weddings in Russia are usually celebrated in the evening, and among the friends are persons corresponding to a godfather and godmother, before whom, previous to coming to church, the happy pair kneel in the house, and ask a blessing. The godfather holds in his hand an ikon, usually of Christ, with which he makes the sign of the cross over the head of the bridegroom, and then gives it him to be his peculiar treasure. In old-fashioned places the godmother gives

There are yet other services, such as the so-called sacrament of penance, which closely resembles, but differs in two important respects from, that of the Church of Rome.*

And, again, the Russian sacrament of unction differs in more than one respect from the Roman.†

For the benediction of water there are two offices: the lesser, which is used whenever consecrated water is required, and the greater, which is performed at the Epiphany, in memory of the baptism of Christ, and is carried out with great ceremony. Another office in the Russian Church is that of "Orthodox Sunday,"

the bride a loaf of bread, symbolical of worldly prosperity, making the sign of the cross. The godmother also presents the bride with an ikon, usually of the Virgin Mary; and these two ikons are carried to the church, figure in the wedding ceremony, and are afterwards taken to the new home, to be sacredly preserved for life, and afterwards bequeathed to their children.

* Both Churches require contrition, and also confession. Confession in both Churches begins at the age of seven years, and is a *secret, periodical, compulsory* acknowledgment of mortal sins to a *priest;* but it is made less *complete* in Russia than in Rome—has less of an inquisitorial character; and hence Dean Stanley says, "The scandals, the influence, the terrors of the confessional are alike unknown in the East." The other important difference between the two Churches is, that subsequent exercises of piety, commonly called "penance," when enjoined upon the penitent in the Russian Church, are not performed as *satisfaction* offered to God. This, it will be seen, closes the gate against a great deal of Roman teaching concerning the meritorious value of good works.

† In the East the oil is not previously consecrated by the bishop, but at the time, by seven priests; and, further, whereas extreme unction is not administered by the Romans until the sick person is beyond hope of recovery, the Russians call for the elders of the Church, pray over him, even though the sickness be but slight, and anoint him with oil, in the hope that he may be healed both spiritually and bodily. The service is performed by seven priests (or at the least three), who place a table in the church or house, on which is set a dish with wheat, a vessel for the oil, and seven twigs with cotton tied around, one for each of the priests, who first anoint the sick and subsequently spread the Gospels, with their hands laid thereon, over his head.

which is in form somewhat similar to the English "Commination Service," and in which anathemas are pronounced against those who impugn various articles of the Russian faith. Yet another service is "the Office of the Holy Unction," that is, for preparing the chrism,* and there are other occasional and curious services, such as for the consecration of a church; for an icon or picture; washing the feet on Thursday in Holy Week; prayers on laying the first stone of a house; for seed time; longer offices to be used in drought, earthquake, plague, incursion of barbarians, for children when they commence their education, and many more; but I think that on this head I have said enough.

* This ointment, made of 23 ingredients, can be consecrated only by a bishop, and in Passion Week. It boils three days, with a depth of five fingers of wine below the oil, and priests and deacons by turns read the Gospel day and night, without ceasing, from Monday till Thursday.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SIBERIAN CHURCH (continued).

Parochial clergy.—Their emoluments.—Duties.—Official registers.—Discipline.—Morality.—Status.—Our clerical visits.—Monastic clergy.—The Metropolitan Macarius.—Fasting.—General view of Russian Church.—Compared with Roman.—Teaching respecting Holy Scripture and salvation by faith.—Needs of Russian Church.

THE Russian clergy are of two orders—the parochial and the monastic; or, as they are sometimes called, the white and the black—the secular and the regular clergy. Such was the plethora of them in the time of Peter the Great that they had to restrict the number of ordinations and of those who should serve.* Now, however, there is no superabundance.† Speaking generally, every parish church is under the control of a *prikhod* or corporation, consisting of the priest, deacon, and two *dïechoks*, or bell-ringer and reader, and also a widow-woman to prepare the sacramental bread.

* In an Episcopal Church, for instance, there were not to be more than one protopope, two treasurers, five priests, four deacons, two readers, and two sacristans, besides thirty-three choristers. In parishes of large extent there were to be two priests, two deacons, two choristers, and two sacristans, reckoning one priest for every hundred houses.

† On the Amur I heard of merchants and, in exceptional cases, even yemstchiks, being ordained; also of students, for lack of a sufficiency of priests, being ordered deacons at the age of 20 (instead of 22), and sometimes made priests seven days after.

The parish priest may rise to be a protopope or head priest of an Episcopal Church, or one who holds a position in which there are other priests under him; but so long as his wife is living he can go no higher. Should he become a widower, and take the monk's habit, he is then eligible to be made a bishop.*

The pay of the town clergy in Russia is better than of those in the country, where it is very little. The salaries of the Siberian clergy, to judge from the district of the Amur, vary from £125 to £180 a year.† Hence those who have families are miserably poor. It is not uncommon to hear them spoken of as exacting, avaricious, and grasping (such charges are easily made, all

* There are, or were, several curious customs and regulations among the Russian clergy with respect to matrimony. A man cannot join the ranks of the white clergy unless he be "the husband of one wife." Formerly he was obliged, or expected, to marry a priest's daughter; and as a priest's daughter sometimes received her father's living for her dowry, a young priest not infrequently found himself, in this way, settled for life; though, if the father-in-law were old and merely retired, then the son-in-law was expected to keep him. In these arrangements the bishop played a part, for knowing, on one hand, the young men coming forward for ordination, and being kept informed, on the other, regarding the marriageable daughters of his clergy, he could frequently make suggestions for the benefit of all parties concerned. There prevailed, too, in former times in Russia, a pernicious custom, that every clergyman's son was obliged to follow the profession of his father. This is no longer compulsory: and the sons of the clergy, finding themselves free, choose other callings to such an extent that there is now a lack of candidates for the priesthood. Candidates, however, are still drawn for the most part from the homes of the clergy, and from the lower class of merchants. Quite recently, I am informed, a few of the Russian nobility have taken Holy Orders.

† Dr. Neale, in his learned work on the Eastern Church, says, "The Russian clergy never possessed tithes. Their income arises from Easter offerings, fees, and glebe, the minimum of the glebe being 181½ acres, to be divided between four clergy." I have heard that the usual remuneration for a country priest in Russia is from £22 to £25 a year, and his share of the glebe. To these must be added, I suppose, his fees. The town priests receive no regular stipend from Government, but in Petersburg and Moscow the income from some of the parishes amounts to £600,

the world over); but due allowance is not always made for the dire needs of poverty; and they sometimes are obliged almost, if not quite, to beg their bread.*

It must not be supposed, however, that, because the pay of the priests is so small, their duties are light. Of their three daily services, the first often begins between four and five in the morning (fancy that with a thermometer below zero!), vespers at sunset, and the liturgy before mid-day. To these must be added occasional services in district churches or chapels, as well as in houses; at every birth, every death in the parish; when a building is begun, after it has been

or more, to be apportioned amongst several clergy. At a cathedral I attended, I was informed that the protopope, from all sources, received about £500 a year and a house; two priests from £220 to £250 each; the deacon about £180; and the psalmist or diechok from £90 to £150; the whole available sum for all the parish clergy in this cathedral being from £1,500 to £1,800 a year. At another cathedral, in the provinces, I was told that the bishop received £110 from the Government, and £75 from the monastery, with monks as servants free. A correspondent further informs me that metropolitans and archbishops receive "large sums for the maintenance of their house, church, singers, serving monks, and other comforts, of which they can take or leave as much as they like"; the "large sums" quoted, with these not insignificant expenses, being from £625 to £1,250 a year; and this for men who rank ecclesiastically with English primates!

* The Russian priests labour under great social disadvantages. They are less instructed than what are called the "educated classes" of their countrymen, and so do not mingle with them on a social equality; and in many of the towns of the interior, intellectual affairs are on so low a level that the priest's most intelligent companion is the schoolmaster, lately arrived perhaps from the capital with a smattering of neology. In one parish of which I know, the old priest said that the new schoolmaster had been telling him, among other like things, that it was not God who made the world, etc., etc., till the priest hardly knew what was right or otherwise. He could not think what a lay person could possibly find to preach about from a verse out of the Bible. This same priest, when recommended pastorally to visit his flock, said, "I never appear among my people except to ask for corn, milk, and eggs, and thus they hate the sight of me." He had not even a Bible, and said he never possessed one.

repaired, and when it is supposed to be haunted ; together with the blessing of school-houses and children before they begin work after the holidays ; to say nothing of processions through the streets with miraculous pictures in times of harvest, pestilence, and danger. In Siberia we saw one of these processions, with a picture, lanterns, and flags, leaving a village church at four o'clock in the morning.

But this is not all. There are the church registers to be kept—all the more important because in Russia no one can stir hand or foot without a character paper, which sets forth, with the minutest details, the particulars of his birth; baptism, marriage, etc. These papers have to be signed and countersigned by the priest and deacon, and then to be sent to the bishop's registry, which, in Siberia, may be 1,000 miles away—and all this with an expenditure of stamps, and red tape, and filling up of blank forms that is simply appalling.* Again, every priest has to keep a clerical journal of his official acts as to what he and his fellows do daily. This is for the bishop's assistant ; and, should

* One of these blank forms, given me by a protopope, relates to each of the clergy in a particular church. Here are the headings of some of the columns :—

1. Name ; place of birth ; from what rank in society ; where educated, and in what subjects ; when promoted to last appointment, by whom, and to what office ; whether holding any additional appointment ; when and how rewarded for service ; whether having a family, and, if so, of what number.

2. What he knows ; of what capacity in reading and explaining the catechism, Scriptures, etc. ; whether he be a singer ; and how many times in the year he has composed his own sermons.

3. His children ; their place of education ; character ; what they are learning ; and their behaviour at home.

4. His family relations.

5. Whether he has ever been accused before the court, and how punished ; or whether the trial is still pending

the journal be suddenly found not written up to date, the priest is liable to be punished. "How would you be punished?" said I to a protopope. "With a good talking to, perhaps, for the first offence; and for the second a fine, or, it may be, have the delinquency inscribed on my character paper"; in other words, to carry a blot on his escutcheon perhaps for life!

Verily, ecclesiastical discipline, whether in great things or small, is not a dead letter in Russia. Perhaps it is not altogether uncalled for. By it priests are forbidden to find their amusements at the theatre, or in cards, buffoonery, or dancing; and mention is made of another evil greater than these, in which we shall recognize an old foe, too well known in England. It is drink!*

It is not matter for surprise, then, that the status of the Russian clergy is low, as it was in England when

* The excellent Russian book on the duty of parish priests, speaking of drunkenness fifty years ago, says, "Yet though drunkenness is a sin so grievous and deadly, there are very many in our time who scarcely pass a day without indulging their sottish passion for drink. Wherefore . . the councils forbid . . . all clerks . . . so much as to enter a tavern, under pain of deprivation and excommunication." This is a painful and humiliating subject, though the more respectable amongst the Russians regard the matter in various lights. Some, of course, condemn such priests unmercifully. One man told me he had not communicated for several years; "for," said he, "how can I in the morning receive the sacrament from the hands of my country priest when I know that before night he will probably be inebriated?" To which some, in effect, reply that he should look at the *light* and not only at the *lantern;* as a religious general said to me, "If my priest supplies me properly with the ordinances of the Church, I am not concerned with his private life—that lies between God and his own soul." Others, again, make allowance for their great temptations. On five festivals in the year, at least, such as Christmas, New Year, Easter, etc., the priest is supposed to go the round of his parish and say a prayer in every house; and on these festive occasions refreshment stands on the sideboard, and *vodka*, or spirits, is offered as drink—the evil results of which, among clergy and laity, on one of the festivals, I myself could not but observe.

Christianity had existed no longer here than it now has in Russia—say in the fourteenth century, when Chaucer wrote his "Canterbury Tales." We have no room for boasting; nor are these remarks made with any idea of drawing unfavourable comparisons, but only to give a true picture of a large class of the Russian ecclesiastics. I called upon some few of the priests in Siberia, who, like the peasants, seemed decidedly superior to, and better off than, those in Russia. On arriving at a post-station, I not unfrequently sent for or called upon the priest, gave him tracts to circulate in his parish, and offered to sell him, at a reduced rate, portions of Scripture for distribution, which offer was almost always accepted.

Let me now pass to the monastic clergy, who alone fill all the higher offices in the Russian Church. Among the monastic clergy are many scholars. The present Metropolitan (Macarius) of Moscow, formerly a professor at the Academy, may be selected as a bright example. He has written extensively, and, from the very outset of his literary career, is said to have resolved to devote all the money derived from his works to the progress of knowledge. He has founded scholarships and prizes at Kieff, Petersburg, and Vilna, and as long ago as 1867 he possessed a capital of £12,000, the interest of which is distributed yearly in premiums for the best compositions in the Russian language. It was this amiable dignitary, as related in my first chapter, whom I had the honour of visiting when passing through Petersburg. Other things might be said to the praise of many of the Russian clergy—notably their simple manner of living. In none of their houses that I entered in Siberia was there the least approach to

luxury, and the library of one of the best priests I met was all too scanty for the literary work he had in hand. I remember, too, that I entered the sleeping-room of the archimandrite (who is also the Metropolitan of Moscow) at the "Skit," near the Troitza monastery, and found a chamber that would be thought not too well furnished for a guest in an average English rectory. Further, in Russia, both orders of clergy fast at least 226 days in the year; and the monastic clergy, which includes all the bishops, never eat flesh at all. I met with a practical illustration of the strictness with which the clergy abstain from forbidden food. At a post station where we stopped, and where the priest had come to us, we invited him to drink tea, and I cut for him a slice of white bread and buttered it. This he declined, as it was a fast-day, and butter was forbidden. I then offered him a slice of bread; but another difficulty arose, for, having to lay in a large stock of white bread at the previous town, we had requested the baker to put in a little butter to keep it moist. The good man's conscience therefore, he felt, would be defiled even by this, and so I was obliged to call for black bread wherewith to entertain our fasting guest.*

Something must be said of the Russian monasteries for women and men. They are of three sorts: Lavra, of which there are only three, namely, at Kieff, Petersburg, and Troitza, near Moscow; next are those called "Cœnobia"; and, lastly, others called "Stauropegia."

* There are four great fasts in the year, during which are eaten only bread, vegetables, and fish: 1. Lent; 2. St. Peter's fast, from Whit-Monday to the 29th June; 3. Fast of the Virgin Mary, from August 1st to 15th; and 4. St. Philip's fast, from November 15th to December 26th. Wednesday and Friday also are fast-days.

Their general characteristics are Egyptian rather than Roman.*

One of the monks of the Yuryef Monastery, near Novgorod, gave me the following outline of their daily life: They rise at half-past two (one o'clock on

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festivals), go to church till six, and from six till

* The Lavra of Egypt are supposed to have been collections of tents in the deserts, where each provided for himself, but joined the rest in common devotions. Cœnobia were institutions where all lived associated. The discipline is the same in all three, but the Stauropegia are under the direct jurisdiction, not of the bishops, but of the Synod. Dr. Neale gives the numbers of Russian monasteries for men at 435, and for women, 113. My almanack mentions a gross total of 472. Greek monks need not be

nine they sleep. Then they go to church again for an hour and a half, and afterwards breakfast. This over, they are free to sleep or do as they please till five in the afternoon, when evening service brings them together for an hour and a half, after which they sup and go to bed. They have but two meals a day, never eat flesh, and, when observing the fasts, eat vegetables only.

To sum up, then, all that need here be said of the Russian Church—very different thoughts arise according as one looks at the every-day religion of the people, or their formularies and theology. The former may cause pain and grief, the latter excite sympathy and hope; and it will be my object in the remainder of this

ecclesiastics, and are all of the order of St. Basil. The head of a large monastery is called an archimandrite (or abbot); of a smaller monastery, a hegumen (or prior), whilst the lady superior of a monastery for women is called a hegumena. There are monk priests, and also monk deacons, and in the churches attached to the nunneries a large part of the service is performed by the nuns. Among the Russian monks, according to Dr. King, are three degrees: novices, who should serve three years; the proficients, who wear the lesser habit; and the perfect, who wear the greater or angelic habit, which last are said to be uncommon in Russia. Men are not admitted to be monks till 30 years of age, and nuns do not receive the tonsure till 60, or at least 50. Younger women may enter as probationers; but they take no vow, and are at liberty to leave and be married. Probationers, whether men or women, wear a black velvet hat without a brim, and the men a black cassock. Proficients have a black veil attached to the hat (with metropolitans this is white), and monastics of the third degree always wear the veil or hood down, and never suffer their faces to be seen. In the time of Peter the Great the monasteries had become homes for the idle, and he issued many salutary rules concerning them. Monastics were to confess and receive the communion four times a year, though they were not compelled to confess to their own superior. They were to avoid idleness; were not allowed (with the exception of the superior, the aged, and infirm) to keep servants; were not to receive or pay visits without permission; and in all monasteries the monks were to be strictly kept to the study of the Bible, the most learned were to explain it, and such only were to be promoted to offices and dignities.

chapter to expand these thoughts in a fair and honest way, without sparing blame or withholding praise.

Most persons, who have had the opportunity of observing, allow that the Russians are a religious people. One sees this not only in the large numbers both of men and women who attend the churches, but also in the tens of thousands who yearly go on pilgrimage to sacred places. The monks of Troitza sometimes have in summer, on a feast day, a thousand guests. Some, of course, are idle wanderers, going from place to place to get food; but many walk hundreds—nay, thousands—of miles to redeem a vow or offer a prayer for something specially desired. Much of this, no doubt, is eminently unspiritual and superstitious. Much of their worship is perilously like, if not altogether, idolatry; yet it should be remembered that the average Russian knows no better; and what can be expected of the peasant, if the highest authorities of the land, on arriving at a city, make it their first object to pay their devotions, if not, as at Ephesus, before "the image which fell down from Jupiter," yet before a picture to which is attributed miraculous powers? We can at least admire, however, the intention in these things; and if the Russian peasant can only be kept sober, he displays a number of virtues, some of which are not found so abundantly in other and more advanced countries. They are a kind, a generous, and a hospitable people, by no means unmindful of philanthropic effort, and at least, we may add, intensely ecclesiastical.

Again, there is much to admire in the formularies of their Church, although Dean Stanley brings against it, and justly, three weighty charges—extravagant ritual,

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excessive dogmatism, and a fatal division between religion and morality. When, however, the Russian Church is compared with the Roman, and spoken of as like it, certain considerations should be borne in mind which make the comparison result in favour of the former. Russia did not receive the religion of Jesus Christ in its purity. The merest tyro in Church history knows that when the stream of Christianity had flowed down to the tenth century, it was no longer pure as at its source. But follow the stream as it branches east and west, and observe which of the two remains the purer.* And if this be said to be *negative*, and much of it belonging to the past, then other considerations may be adduced which seem to bring the Greek Church nearer to the English than many suppose, and notably so in two vital points, namely, the attitude of the Russian Church to the Holy Scriptures,†

* When clerical celibacy, for instance, was imposed in the West, it was not followed in the East, nor was the cup denied to the Russian laity when it was withheld from the Roman. The Russian Church never fabricated a purgatory, and then sold indulgences to get people out of it. The Eastern Church has never added uncatholic articles to the Nicene Creed, as in that of Pope Pius the Fourth, and issued the whole as binding upon all who would be saved. Again, the errors of the East have at least the stamp of antiquity. They have not added to the Christian faith novel articles, such as the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, or still less claimed a supremacy and infallibility which in the early Christian councils would need only to have been mentioned to have been scouted; but in a very real sense it may be said that Russia has kept the faith as she received it.

† It may surprise some, as I confess it at first surprised me, to learn the place the Russian Church gives to the Bible in her "Treatise on the Duty of Parish Priests,"—a book by two Russian bishops, which has been adopted by the whole Sclavonian Church, and which all candidates for orders are required to have read, and to show their acquaintance with before being ordained. The book begins by saying that "to teach the people is the priest's very first duty," and then (VII.) that the priest is to teach the faith and the law; that (IX.) "all the articles of faith are contained in the Word of God—that is, in the books of the Old and New Testament"; and that (XI.) "none other books are to be held by us as Divine Scriptures, or called

and her doctrine respecting salvation through Christ alone.* She does not forbid or hide the Scriptures from the people, even if she neglects them, nor has she stereotyped her errors by the claim to infallibility. There is room, therefore, to hope for a change for the better, which in my humble opinion should be attempted from within, by a wider circulation and more general study of the Scriptures; next, by a vastly increased amount of good and Scriptural preaching; and, once more, by a powerful attack on the prevailing sin of intemperance. Would the priests only endeavour to instil into their people, respecting drink, half the abstemiousness and self-denial that they teach them to observe concerning forbidden food, they would render Russia such a service as I have no words to express.

the Word of God, than the two volumes of the Old and New Testaments." Again (XIII.), that "the writings of the Holy Fathers are of great use. . . . But neither the writings of the Holy Fathers, nor the traditions of the Church, are to be confounded or equalled with the Word of God and His commandments; for the Word of God is one thing, but the writings of the Holy Fathers and traditions ecclesiastical are another." And further (XXXII.), "So great being this work of teaching, etc. . . . we cannot fail to see how needful it is for the priest to abound both in word and in wisdom, in order to the well-fulfilling of this his vast duty; and the only way hereto is that he be skilled and nourished up from a child in Holy Scripture."

* The "Treatise on the Duty of Parish Priests" reads (XXIX.): "Since the sole beginner and perfecter of our holy faith and of everlasting salvation is our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. xii. 2), and there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but only His (Acts iv. 12), . . . it is plain that in each of the above kinds of teaching, the priest ought to instil the knowledge of Christ Jesus, inculcate His doctrine, dwell on His exceeding compassion, and possess the soul with this truth, that Christ *alone is made unto us of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption* (1 Cor. i. 30). . . . In every case, I say, according to circumstances, he can implant, and is in duty bound to implant, the knowledge of Christ Jesus; and so all instruction, and every particular instruction, should be grounded on Christ; for all that can be either written or said in reference to the faith, and to everlasting happiness, if it be not grounded on faith in Christ, is unfruitful, and can never save."

CHAPTER XVII.

FROM TOMSK TO KRASNOIARSK.

Book-distribution in Western Siberia.—Departure from Tomsk.—Post-bells.—How to sit in posting.—Sleeping.—Boundary of Western Siberia.—Wild and domesticated animals.—Birds.—Scenery.—Road-side villages.—Peasants' houses.—Hammering up "the Prodigal Son."—Siberian towns.—Houses of upper classes.—Misadventures.—A hospitable merchant.—Frontier of Eastern Siberia.

I HAVE said that, on returning to Tomsk, we found the remainder of our books arrived. The reader may like to know how we had prospered in relation to their distribution through Western Siberia. Our singular mission greatly puzzled the Russians. I have since heard how it reached the ears of the worthy Archbishop of Tobolsk that a strange Englishman had been through the district, leaving thousands of books to be given away. Like a watchful shepherd, his first anxiety was to see that they contained no heresy. Having examined the books, however, and perused a set of the tracts, he found them exceedingly good, and would by no means put anything in the way of their distribution; but, said his Eminence, "Those English are a queer lot, and there must surely be some ulterior motive behind it." To the same effect were many of the officials' cogitations as they oozed out and reached me from time to time. We met with no opposition, however, or even questioning of what we

were doing. The fact that the revolutionists have sometimes distributed seditious leaflets inside pamphlets approved by the censor makes the police on the alert in European Russia; but I have usually found even there, so long as all was clear and aboveboard, that the authorities were willing to forward my endeavours; and I so far availed myself of this willingness in Siberia as to distribute more through the authorities than formerly, and less in proportion with our own hands. Still, we gave an immense number personally, and many also we sold, on the principle that a man values most what he pays for. At each of the towns and villages on the Obi we made up parcels and sent them with a note to the parish priest, asking him to distribute the books gratuitously. As the periodical—*The Russian Workman*—could be had post-free for a rouble a year, many said they should get it. One man intimated that he should write for 50 copies forthwith, and another that he should get the same number of subscribers in his neighbourhood, on the Lower Obi, where he had built a little church, and had had his son instructed to read to the people. Our greatest success, however, in Western Siberia, and one that would have repaid us for all our trouble, has since proved to be the plans laid at Tiumen, through which town, as observed before, some 18,000 exiles pass yearly. From data given me in the prison, we had calculated that there would be about 2,000 pass during the summer who could read, and for these I left 1,980 Russian Scripture portions, 36 Polish, German, French, Tatar, and Mongolian Scriptures, 546 copies of the *Rooski Rabotchi*, and 2,520 tracts. The exiles going east are sent

away in the barge weekly, and, before the party starts, a religious service is held by a priest at Tiumen. I have since heard that after this service, throughout the summer, our books were distributed; so that I trust they are now to be found not only among the convicts in prisons, but also with those who have been sent to live free, but in comparative solitude, in the furthest corners of the country.

Some have shaken their heads and said that the men would sell the books, and make cigarettes of the tracts. This, however, I doubt; but, even if it be so, it may simply mean, in the case of the Scriptures, that a book has passed from the hands of one who did not care for it to those of one who does. But the Russians have great respect, amounting almost to superstition, for what they call "holy books"; and such books are a great deal too scarce to allow of their being generally uncared for. Moreover, in Siberia, books of this character and tracts are *new*. In European Russia, many, on receiving the books, said they had no idea there were such publications in existence; and we had cases in Asia of soldiers giving their last kopeck to get a copy of the Gospels, the Psalms, or the New Testament.

Before leaving Tomsk we gave the Governor books for the public institutions of his government, and left with him boxes to be forwarded to the residence of the Governor-General Kaznakoff, at Omsk. I had been made acquainted with this latter officer, both officially and privately, in Petersburg, and had been invited to call upon him on my return through Omsk, to be introduced to his family. The general had told me also to telegraph to him in case I got into prison,

or in the event of any other small casualty, and I looked forward with pleasure to my visit; but with my subsequent change of plans, I wrote asking that the books I had sent might be distributed in the provinces of Akmolinsk and Semipolatinsk, and thus finished arrangements for the supply of the public institutions in all the four provinces of Western Siberia: our total distribution thus far being 4,000 Scriptures and 9,000 pamphlets and tracts.

We now prepared to drive into Eastern Siberia, and on Thursday evening, June 19th, galloped out of Tomsk in two troikas, containing ourselves and baggage—the latter reduced, but still a heavy load. Outside the town the tongues of our horses' bells were unloosed, and we jingled merrily along. The said bells are placed beneath the *douga*, over the centre horse, and are intended to give notice to the public generally, and all whom it may concern, that *post*-horses are coming, and, accordingly, that it is their bounden duty to get out of the way. If they fail to do this, which is sometimes the case, especially at night, when the drivers of slow-going vehicles are nodding on their seats, then "the rule of the road" is that the post-boy may give them a cut with his whip—a visitation inflicted sometimes upon men, and sometimes, with caravans, upon the leading horse, which, in his driver's absence or sleep, is supposed to know the side of the road he ought to take.

We were now becoming accustomed to our jolting mode of travel, and I had already discovered a secret in connection therewith worth handing down to posterity. It concerns the position of the body and legs in the tarantass. If you place your heels against the

front of the vehicle, or against a bag or box, your feet become excessively tired; and if you lie at full length, flat, you may soon imagine yourself in a ship's berth, rolling from side to side. Now, my golden secret is this: First secure to yourself (in a hole if possible) a soft, springy base upon which to sit, and then place on that a ribbed circular air-cushion. Secondly, put your down-pillow behind at an angle of 60 degrees, and, if you like, an air-pillow, without ribs, in the nape of your neck. But the next arrangement is the most important. Draw up your legs till the knees come on a level with your chin; then put beneath the knee-pits a soft parcel or bag, sufficiently high to leave the feet dangling above the ground; and the result will be that you will travel with comparative comfort by night and by day continuously for 1,000 miles. Being thus fixed before and behind, and kept laterally straight by the side of the vehicle and your companion, the only direction in which you can be shot is upwards and heavenwards, to come down, alas! on the old spot; and this must be accepted as your minimum amount of local disturbance. The reader may think it utterly impossible to sleep under such circumstances—and at first it is so. But Nature will assert her claims. A Siberian priest told us that, when he travelled from Europe, he could not at first sleep at all in the tarantass; but that, when at last he did so, he lost no less than three hats whilst wrapped in slumber. As for myself, I soon learnt to doze; and in my journal of June 21st I find the entry, "Managed to sleep quite soundly in the tarantass till 8 o'clock this morning." It was not always, however, one could sleep the whole night through; and I recollect on one occasion awaking

from a beautiful dream of pleasant society in an English drawing-room to find myself, to my disgust, outside a Siberian post-house. On another occasion I had been sleeping soundly, and, on looking out early in the morning, found that the driver had followed my example; and the horses, not feeling the lash, had followed suit, and so we had come to a standstill, and all were slumbering together. I gave the man, however (to confess it for once), a dig in the back; his whip fell on the horses, and they galloped in style to the end of the stage.

On the third day after leaving Tomsk, we approached the boundary that divides Western from Eastern Siberia; but up to this point we had not met with a large number of wild animals. No wolves came alongside the tarantass as they did last year in the Caucasus, nor did we so much as catch sight of a bear, as on my journey from Archangel.* As to domesticated animals, large herds of cows were seen, and milk was abundant. Strange to say, however, the people make little or no cheese; and the peasants do not usually butter their bread. Their fresh butter, when they make it, is without salt, and is generally used for cooking. The pigs of the country are a long-legged breed, and are frequently seen running about the village streets. They furnish the long bristles from their mane which are used for making brooms.

* Mr. Atkinson gives the following list of mammalia as inhabiting Siberia:—The reindeer, stag, roebuck, elk; the argali, or wild sheep, and wild boar; the jackal, wolf, tiger, and bear; the Corsac and Arctic foxes; the lynx, glutton, and polecat; the beaver, otter, badger, hedgehog, ermine, Arctic hare; sable; flying, striped, and common squirrels; the Siberian and common marmots; the water and common rats; the mouse, bat, and mole.

We saw no lack of birds of prey in Western Siberia, for hawks of various kinds are seen sailing gracefully over every town. We met with the largest number of sportsmen's birds between Tiumen and Tobolsk, chiefly water-birds, with wild ducks and geese in abundance. I tasted at Ekaterineburg the *gluchar*, or cock of the wood, the same as our capercailzie. It was a well-tasted bird, from whose breast ten persons were helped, and it may be bought in the winter at Ekaterineburg for 8*d.* In the Altai regions is found a magnificent eagle called the bearcoot, of which specimens are shown in the Barnaul Museum. It is strong enough to kill a deer with ease; and it not unfrequently happens that, when wolves have killed and begun to eat their prey, a pair of bearcoots will attack and kill or drive them away, and eat their intended meal. The Kirghese tame these birds for the purpose of hunting.

As we pursued our way towards Eastern Siberia, there was a slight improvement in the landscape. For a long distance, after leaving Tomsk, the country was flat; but in the direction of Krasnoiarsk was seen a range of hills to the south, dotted with pine-trees, the country looking English-like and fertile, well wooded, and here and there under cultivation. Hitherto the herbage had been singularly luxuriant; but, from the station next before Atchinsk, pasture became less plentiful, and thus, in a measure, explained why henceforth our hire of horses was to cost us double. The number of towns and villages along the road for the first 400 miles of the way—that is, from Tomsk to Krasnoiarsk—was more numerous than might be expected, though, the further east we went, the further apart they were.

The post-houses were rarely more than from ten to fifteen miles distant from one another, and we frequently drove through two or three intervening villages. To describe one village is to describe them all—the chief difference being that whilst each consists of a single street, with detached houses on either side of the way, some villages are larger than others. One we passed through was said to be nearly three miles long. The said street is usually wide, but never by any chance paved, though now and then a few boards are laid down for a footway. Nor is the street usually beautified with anything worthy the name of a garden. Now and then a few trees are planted in front of a house, but with such a high, clumsy pallisade to keep off the cattle, that the attempted cultivation of beauty becomes rather a disfigurement than otherwise. The priest's house is often one of the best in the place. So, again, the post-house usually stands out prominently; and if there happen to be any Government official in the village, an extra coat of paint, or some little ornamentation about the exterior, may point out the house inhabited by superiors; but ordinarily the houses of the peasants or farmers are very much alike. The foundation may perchance be of stone, but all else is of wood. For the walls, trees are cut and barked, slightly flattened by being cut away on two opposite sides, and then laid one above the other, the ends being dovetailed together at the corners. The interstices between the logs are calked with moss, and the roof is generally of overlapping boards. So long as the foundation holds good, the houses look tolerably neat; but when this begins to give, or the logs to rot, they become strained and warped in so many

directions as to present a very dilapidated appearance. When the houses are intended for the accommodation of human beings only, they generally have no second storey; but in the case of farm-houses, where cattle are sheltered, we frequently found them having an upper storey approached by an outside staircase. There were usually also out-houses adjoining, and under the same roof; so that one had but to leave the dwelling-room upstairs, cross a passage, and open a door, to find oneself looking down upon beasts and cattle, and other denizens of a farm-yard, which share the same roof, though not, like the Irish pig, the same apartments as their owners. The interior of the house is as simple as the outside. In the centre is a brick stove. The walls are whitewashed or papered, and adorned with pictures according to the means and taste of the owners. Portraits of the Imperial family figure largely, so do battle scenes, pictures of the saints, and family photographs. As already observed, I took with me a large number of illustrated prints of "The Prodigal Son," round which was written the parable in Russ. Having provided myself with a hammer and tacks, I was wont to go into the guest-room at the post-houses, and there nail up the picture, to the great admiration usually of the post-master. I have heard from a gentleman, who has recently crossed Siberia, that these pictures still adorn the walls of the post-houses, and that the books given with them are carefully preserved. My action, however, was not always understood at first, especially by those who could not read. One woman, who saw only an early stage of my operations, ran off to her husband as frightened as if I had been nailing up an Imperial

ukase. They usually proceeded at once to read the parable; some said they should have it framed; and one post-master, a Jew, said in German, as he finished reading, that it was "a right good story."

What has been said of Siberian houses thus far refers more especially to the houses of the peasantry and their villages. The traveller, however, from Tomsk passes certain small towns which have cross streets, wooden footways, perchance a small hospital, and the residence of an ispravnik, or a few well-to-do merchants. On entering the dwelling of one of these classes, one finds large rooms, papered walls, and painted floors, with perhaps a square of carpet near the sofa and table. Things look plain but comfortable within; and the out-houses, such as kitchen and bath-house, are at a convenient distance in the yard. The liability of the kitchen to catch fire partly accounts for its being detached; and these out-houses serve as a residence for the servants.

Houses occupied by persons highest in position, such as governors of provinces, and high military officers, are also of wood, and often without a second storey; but the rooms are more spacious and *en suite*, enlivened with flowers and creepers, and the tables enriched by articles of *virtu* from Europe. It is interesting to an Englishman to see how many things from London find their way to these remote regions. Thus, when sitting at a desk, one finds oneself among Cumberland leads and Perry's coloured pencils, and a dozen other trifles, reminders of home.

Our journey from Tomsk to Krasnoiarsk was not entirely devoid of incident, our misadventures being connected for the most part with a limping wheel.

Our first misadventure happened in returning from Barnaul, when, in the middle of the night, in the midst of a field, one of our shafts broke. But this might have happened anywhere; and fortunately there happened to be a man resting by the roadside to feed his horses, who lent us his pole to go to the next station. Early in the morning, however, it was discovered that our Siberian Jehu had been driving so furiously that, like Phaëton, his classical ancestor, he had set the wheels on fire. Matters were made worse for want of a smith at hand; and when we found a smith, he had no coal. We applied, therefore, a liberal allowance of grease, and limped on to Tomsk, where the whole concern was supposed to be put in order and cleaned, with the addition of new shafts and mended wheels, at a cost of nearly £2. We had not travelled four-and-twenty hours before the wheel was again on fire, and we paid several shillings for the repair of the axletree; a little further on, 24*s.* more; and then, on the evening of the third day, we arrived at a village where lived a smith. Now this man was well known in the district as an extortioner. He came to us clad in a pea-green dressing-gown, and smoked a cigarette as he leisurely walked round the tarantass, just as a man surveys a horse. He informed us that he would put us right for £5, which we flatly refused to give. "But you will certainly break down if you proceed," urged the extortioner. "Then," said I, "if we do, we will not come to *you* for assistance." Said some of the people, "You had better go on to the next station at Bogotol, where there lives a merchant named So-and-so; and if you ask him he will recommend you to an honest wheelwright." With our

spokes roped together, therefore, and wetted, we waddled on, and arrived at Bogotol between three and four in the morning.

"Is the merchant So-and-so at home?" was the first question we asked at the post-house. "Yes," said they; "but he is asleep, and will get up for nobody." "Indeed," said I to my interpreter, "will you go to him and say as politely as you can that an Englishman travelling to Irkutsk has met with an accident, and will be greatly obliged if he can recommend him an honest wheelwright?" And off went Mr. Interpreter, with a glum countenance, evidently not liking his job. He knocked at the merchant's door, expecting to get roundly abused for his intrusion. But the merchant, on ascertaining what was the matter, asked the stranger in, and shouted to his servants, Peter, Timothy, and John, to bestir themselves. One he sent for the wheelwright, another to heat the samovar, and a third to prepare some food; and then, said he, "I cannot think of letting you go till the wheelwright comes, and all is going well"; after which he plied his visitor with talk, telling him what a famous place was Siberia; that any one might come in his neighbourhood, and, without payment, till as much land or cut as much grass as he liked, no man forbidding him; though labour, he added, was scarce, and imported goods dear. Thus, after tea and talk, and the arrival of the workman, the merchant returned to his slumbers. But I thought this one of the finest examples of hospitality and kindness to strangers I had ever met with, and I wondered much whether a broken-down Russian traveller, knocking up an Englishman at four in the morning, and asking to be recommended to an honest wheelwright, would have received

a kindlier reception. The honest wheelwright mended us up for a few shillings, and, after calling to thank the merchant, we started, and about noon reached Krasnorechinska. Here we called upon the priest, who had 3,000 parishioners, of whom he said 200 could read, for whom we gave him some pamphlets, and sold him four New Testaments. He possessed a large Russian Bible, which cost upwards of six shillings, and was, he said, the cheapest to be had.

By night we reached Atchinsk, the first station in Eastern Siberia, and although the roads were perceptibly better immediately we crossed the border, our poor wheel was out of trim again, and threatened to detain us far into the morrow. And now came sundry physicians to administer advice, chiefly, however, in their own favour. One wished to sell us a new wheel for £1, another to make an exchange of our two front wheels for £2, and so on; in answer to which I declared that I would go straight to the Ispravnik and show my grand letter from Petersburg. "But," urged Mr. Interpreter, "the Ispravnik has nothing to do with mending wheels!" "True," I replied; but—"Let us go!" And so we did, and were kindly received. "If your axletrees are of iron," said the Ispravnik, "I doubt whether there are any persons in the place capable of mending them; but, even if there are, they will most likely be drunk, as to-day is a *fête;* and you must therefore wait till to-morrow." I pleaded, however, that he should do his best, and things turned out better than he prophesied. A wheelwright was found, who for half-a-crown enabled us to proceed, and early next morning we reached Krasnoiarsk.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE YENESEI.

Sources of the river.—Discoveries of Wiggins and Nordenskjold.—The Yenesei at Krasnoiarsk.—Current, width, depth.—Breaking up of ice.—The Yeneseisk province.—Geography.—Meteorology.—Forests.—Timber.—Fish of Yenesei.—Birds.—Russian population.—Navigation.—Corn and cattle.—Towns.—A Scoptsi village.—Salubrity of climate.—The aborigines.—Ethnology.—Tunguses.—Fur-bearing animals.—Methods of hunting.—Minerals.

THE most remarkable of the natural features of the Yeneseisk province is its wonderful river, the Yenesei,* much of our knowledge of which, below Krasnoiarsk, we owe to the discoveries of Wiggins and Seebohm, Nordenskjold and Théel, all of whose information has come to us within the past seven years.†

As I stood on the banks of the Yenesei at Krasnoiarsk, it appeared to me the most majestic stream I

* Its most distant sources rise under another name in Mongolia, on the eastern side of the Khangai mountains, whence the Selenga and the Orkhon, flowing together into Lake Baikal, emerge as the Angara, which flows into the Yenesei proper near the town of Yeneseisk. The stream that is *called* the Yenesei, however, rises in the Tannu range of the Altai mountains, whence it bursts through the Sayansk chain in cataracts and rapids, and enters Siberia south of Minusinsk; and then, flowing on beyond Krasnoiarsk, it is joined by the Angara, the Lower and Upper Tunguska, and the Kureika, all flowing in on the right bank. The Russians give its length as 3,472 miles, thus making the Yenesei the fourth longest river in the world, being exceeded only by the Nile, the Amazon, and the Mississippi.

† *See* Appendix D.

had ever beheld; and, when looking at the rush of its waters, I was thankful that we had attempted nothing so rash as to descend by a raft on its bosom; for, however pleasant a method of travelling from Minusinsk this might be in summer, it would be nothing short of madness to attempt it during the spring floods. Some idea of the swiftness of the current may be gathered from the report of M. Théel, who says that, including stoppages and without rowing, they were carried in their boat from Krasnoiarsk to Yeneseisk, a distance of 300 miles, in 2½ days; that is to say, they floated down the stream at just about the same speed as we attained with three horses at our best travelling, namely, 130 miles in a day and night. Allowing for stoppages, they floated at the rate of seven miles an hour. Dr. Peacock, who lives at Krasnoiarsk, informed me that the river in quiet places has a current of five miles an hour; in swifter places of 10 miles, and in some very rapid parts of 17 miles an hour; but this last may perchance refer to the two rapids, through one of which M. Théel's party had to shoot at Padporoschensk, about 170 miles below Krasnoiarsk, and the other, of which Mr. Seebohm speaks as remaining unfrozen all the winter through.*

I imagine that the grandest thing to be witnessed on the Lower Yenesei is the breaking-up of the ice,

* The gigantic proportions of the Yenesei will be further realized from its width, which at Krasnoiarsk, 1,700 miles from the sea, is more than 1,000 yards, and at Yeneseisk it measures rather more than a mile. From thence it widens gradually, so that at the Kureika it enlarges to about three miles; and between Tolstonosovsk and Goltchikha it expands like a lake with a breadth of more than 40 miles. The delta and lagoon formed by its waters are about 400 miles in length. The depth of the river varies, of course, according to the season, but opposite Dudinsk M. Théel's sounding-line indicated a depth of 12 fathoms. The river has a fall of

which Mr. Seebohm has described as he saw it in 1877. Proceeding down the river on the ice with Captain Wiggins, they reached the ship *Thames* in her winter quarters near the confluence of the Kureika with the Yenesei, and were quietly waiting for the opening of the navigation, when on the 1st of June commenced what Mr. Seebohm calls the "battle of the Yenesei." The pressure underneath caused a large field of ice to break away, which, by collision with an angular point of the bank, resulted in the piling up of a little range of ice mountains 50 or 60 feet high, and picturesque in the extreme. Huge blocks of ice, six feet thick and 20 feet long, were seen standing perpendicularly, whilst others were crushed up in fragments like broken pottery. Some were white, and some clear as glass, and blue as an Italian sky. Then the river began to rise, and in the course of the night the whole crust of the Yenesei, as far as could be seen, broke up with a tremendous crash, and a dense mass of ice-floes and pack-ice rushed irresistibly up the Kureika, driving the poor ship like a toy before it, and leaving it in the evening, amidst huge hummocks of ice, almost high and dry. The velocity of these masses of pack-ice on the Yenesei was reckoned on some days to be not less than 20 miles an hour. This sort of thing continued for a fortnight, and during two days it was calculated

4,000 feet, and the banks generally are steep and lofty, from 60 to 100 feet above the water. Thus it would seem that comparatively little land is covered by the summer floods, which is just the reverse in the case of the Obi. M. Théel observes, however, that it frequently happens, when one bank is high, the other is low, from which it follows that the vegetation on either side assumes a somewhat different character; for where the bank is low, and consequently exposed to inundations, one sees abundance of willows, whilst the higher bank is very often covered with fir, pine, and larch.

that 50,000 acres of ice passed the ship up the constantly changing Kureika, which alternately rose and fell. Many square miles of ice were marched up for some hours, and then marched back again. Sometimes the pack-ice and floes were jammed so tightly together that it looked as if one might scramble across the river without much difficulty. At other times there was a good deal of open water, and the icebergs "calved" as they went along, with much commotion and splashing, that could be heard a mile off. Underlayers of icebergs grounded, and after the velocity of the enormous mass had caused it to pass on, the "calves," or pieces left behind, rose to the surface like whales coming up to breathe. Some of them must have done so from a good depth, for they rose out of the water with a considerable splash, and rocked about for some time before settling down to their floating level. At last took place the final march past of the beaten winter forces in this great 14 days' "battle," and for seven days more came slowly down the stragglers of the great Arctic army—worn and weather-beaten little icebergs, dirty ice-floes looking like mudbanks, and broken pack-ice in the last stage of destruction—after which the river was found to have risen to a height of 70 feet.

To proceed, however, from the river to the basin through which it flows. The Yenesei gives its name to Yeneseisk, that central Siberian province which is bounded on the west by the governments of Tobolsk and Tomsk, and on the east by those of Yakutsk and Irkutsk. It is the only province that stretches across the country from the Altai range to the Arctic Ocean, a distance from north to south of nearly 2,000 miles; or, to put it in another way, it extends from the latitude of London

to that of the most northerly point of Asia, within 14 degrees of the North Pole.*

The province is divided into six uyezds, with six principal towns, viz., Krasnoiarsk, Minusinsk, Yeneseisk, Kansk, Atchinsk, and Turukhansk. The differences of temperature between its various parts are, of course, very great. The southern portions about Minusinsk we heard spoken of as the Italy of Siberia; and at Krasnoiarsk, towards the end of June, we found the temperature like that of an English summer. Further north, at Yeneseisk, the greatest heat of the year 1877 (registered in June) was 92·5, whilst the greatest cold sunk to 59·2 below zero. This cold was exceeded in December of the same year at Turukhansk, where the thermometer sank to 63·0 below zero.

The province is covered with magnificent forests up to the Arctic Circle, but the trees rapidly diminish in size further north, and disappear soon after lat. 69°. These forests are principally of pine. In the neighbourhood of Krasnoiarsk the pine and the larch attain to colossal dimensions. The pine frequently rises to 200 feet in height, but is never more than six feet in

* The province has an area of nearly a million square miles—that is to say, is somewhat larger than the aggregate surface covered by Austria, France, Russia, Spain, and all the British possessions in Europe. The southern part only is mountainous, all above the 60th parallel being flat and swampy. It has some half-dozen large and thousands of smaller lakes in the *tundras* of the north, and the province is well watered by the Yenesei and its larger affluents,—namely, the Angara, the Podkamennaia (or stony) Tunguska, the Nijnaia (or lower) Tunguska, and the Kureika. In 1873 the population was thus classified: hereditary nobles, 800; personally noble, 1,600; ecclesiastical persons of all sorts, 4,000; townspeople, 20,000; rural population, 232,000; military, 15,000; foreigners, 42; and others, probably aborigines, 122,000. The total population in 1880 was 372,000, or about three-fourths of the population of Liverpool.

diameter at the base. The larch, which has the furthest northern range, sometimes attains to the same height, but its diameter is but four feet on the surface of the ground.*

The forests abound with animal life, as do the rivers with fish. Fish forms the principal food of the natives, and in summer almost every one is a fisherman, using nets and lines, or spearing by torchlight. In the Yenesei are found pike, ruff, perch, and tench, all which are little esteemed, and serve as food for the dogs. The more valued are the sturgeon, salmon, and various species of the genus *Coregonus*. The common sturgeon is caught along the whole Yenesei, and sometimes weighs more than 200 lbs. The sterlet

* The larch is called in Russ *listvenitsa* (from *list*, a leaf, and *venets*, a crown), in allusion to the arrangement of its acicular leaves. Its wood looks well for the walls and ceilings of the peasants' rooms. The larch is highly valued also for its power of resisting the effects of moisture, besides which, when used as fuel, it is found to produce a high degree of heat (in which respect the birch comes next), though it does not produce a brilliant light. For the tile-kilns it is preferable to all other wood, but it is not used for charcoal, nor does it serve well for burning in the house, on account of the pungent and stupefying qualities of its smoke; nor in the furnaces used for the manufacture of rolled iron plates, for it soils the metal.

The elegant spruce fir, with its branches almost down to the root and trailing on the ground, is more abundant, and extends nearly as far north. The Siberians look upon this tree as very important for commercial purposes. The wood is white, light, and very elastic. It is the favourite tree for masts, and is considered the best substitute for ash for oars, and it makes the best "knees" for shipbuilding. Snow-shoes also are generally made of this wood. The quality is good down into the roots. It is, however, subject to very hard knots, which are said to blunt the edge of any axe not made of Siberian steel. The Siberian spruce is less abundant, and differs from the common spruce in having a smooth bark of an ash-grey colour. The leaves are also of a much darker and bluer green. The wood is soft and liable to crack and decay, and is consequently of little commercial value; but, being easy to split, it is largely used for roofing and for fuel. The cost of firewood in Siberia per *sajen*, or seven-feet cube, is 3*s*., as compared with 12*s*. in Petersburg, and from 20*s*. to 30*s*. at Moscow.

usually weighs only three or four lbs., but occasionally reaches 18. The salmon is most numerous in the upper course of the river at Minusinsk, where it is caught in great numbers.

The birds of the Yeneseisk province have received much attention from Mr. Seebohm. He brought home, in 1877, about 500 eggs, and more than 1,000 skins, but he thinks that he would have had a still larger bag had he made Yeneseisk his head-quarters instead of the Kureika. He speaks of a perfect Babel of birds when the ice was breaking up at the beginning of June. Gulls, geese, and swans were flying about in all directions, also flocks of redpoles and shore-larks, bramblings and wagtails; and in the course of the summer were seen the sea-eagle, the rough-legged buzzard, the

At Krasnoiarsk a log of building timber, 80 feet long, costs from 20*d.* to 3*s.*, whilst bricks cost from 16*s.* to 20*s.* per 1,000. The Scotch fir, with the upper trunk and branches almost of a cinnamon yellow, is in many places very abundant.

The Siberian is proudest, however, of his cedar—a tree very similar in appearance to the Scotch fir, but more regular in its growth—clothed with branches nearer to the ground, and with an almost uniform grey trunk. For furniture and indoor wood it is considered to be the best timber in the country, and is said never to rot or shrink, warp or crack. It is soft and easy to work, but has a fine grain, and is almost free from knots. The Ostjaks use it for building their large boats. They take a trunk two or three feet in diameter, split it, and of each half make a wide, thin board. Having no proper saws, they are obliged to cut the wood away with an axe, and thus the greater part of the tree is wasted. The Russian peasant is still more prodigal with his timber, for when I was going through the forest east of the Yenesei, a felled cedar-tree was pointed out, and the remark made that it was quite usual that a man who wanted nuts should cut down a fine tree for the sole purpose of replenishing his bag with the nut-filled cones.

The birch is common up to the 70th parallel, and still further north, on the tundra, in suitable localities, the creeping birch and two or three sorts of willow may be met with. The alder is abundant, and the juniper. The poplar is found as far north as Turukhansk. The Ostjaks hollow their canoes from the trunks of this tree.

sparrow-hawk, and various kinds of owls. In addition to our species of cuckoo, the Himalayan cuckoo made its way to these regions, though it had a different note to that of our English bird—a guttural and hollow-sounding *hoo*, which could be heard at a great distance. Ravens and carrion-crows were plentiful, and jackdaws, magpies, and starlings were seen at Yeneseisk, though the jackdaw and starling did not go much further north, which remark applies also to the bullfinch. The nut-cracker was found as far north as the Kureika, where it showed a desire to be sociable, and often perched on the rigging of the *Thames*. Besides these, Mr. Seebohm, among many other birds, mentions the thrush, the black, hazel, and willow grouse, the capercailzie, bittern, crane, lapwing, and golden plover. Towards the end of summer is to be seen, he says, a curious sight on the tundras—flocks of geese in full moult and unable to fly.

The Russian population of the province is settled for the more part in towns and villages by the side of the river, and along the great high road crossing it. The natives wander over the remainder. Russian villages are seen from 10 to 15 miles apart on the rivers' banks, at which travellers proceeding north may find oarsmen in summer and horses in winter,—horses, that is, as far as Turukhansk, beyond which first dogs and then reindeer are employed.

Most of the corn that is raised in the province grows about Minusinsk, where it may be bought at a fabulously low price, and whence it is brought down the river in barges and flat-bottomed boats.* Rye is not cultivated

* In 1876 the number of steamers on the Yenesei was four, all of which had paddle-wheels, and were used for tugging barges. The steamers took

further north than Antsiferova, 40 miles below Yeneseisk, and oats not beyond Zotina, on the 60th parallel. Potatoes are cultivated up to Turukhansk, but they are small. Agriculture, in fact, practically ceases a little beyond Yeneseisk. The Russians alone give any attention to it, as the natives are too busy fishing during their short summers to till the land. Cattle are raised to some small extent in the valley of the Yenesei, though the people do not appear to understand how to make the most of them. Cows are found as far as Dudinsk; but though in some of the villages they may have 40 or 50, it is almost impossible to get a glass of milk, the calves being allowed to take it all. An Anglo-Russian lady informs me that, were these cows treated like English ones, even for a few days, they would lose their milk; therefore a Russian cow is only partially milked, the rest being left for her calf. A scientific gentleman told my friend that it is the peculiarity of all cows only lately redeemed from a wild state to lose their milk when deprived of their calves. The making of butter is only half known on the Yenesei, and of cheese not at all. Sheep are found as far as Vorogova, and goats up to Yeneseisk.

Of the towns and villages on the Yenesei, Yeneseisk

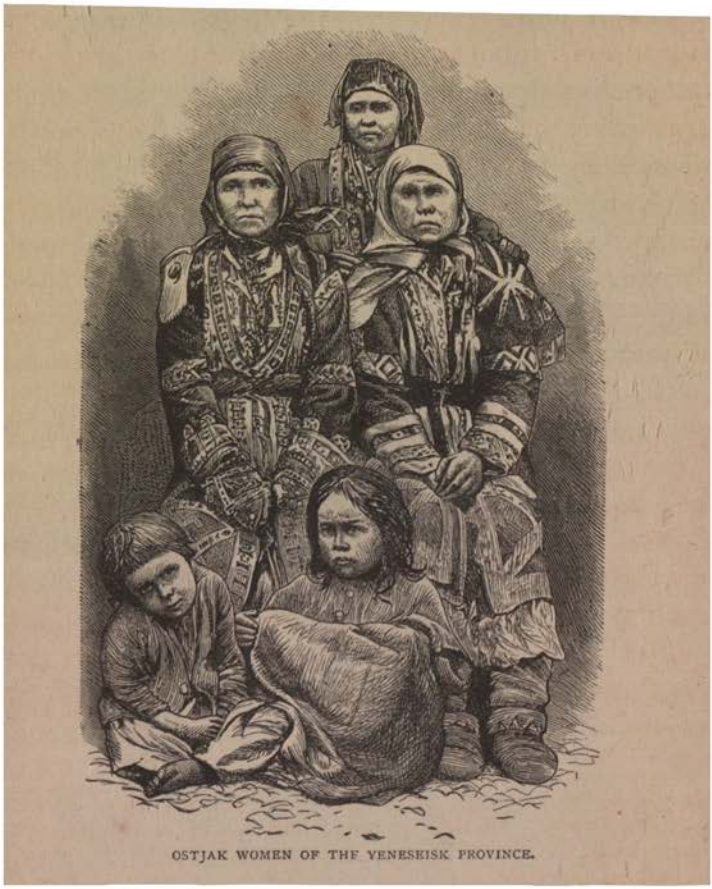
no cargo on board, and some of the barges were arranged like floating shops. These last leave Yeneseisk at the end of May, and return from the lower part of the river at the end of September, during which period the two largest steamers, with engines of 60 or 70-horse power, make two voyages, the smaller only one. Some of the barges are of 250 tons burthen. Besides these steamers, there were two sailing-boats of 50 tons burthen each, and a number of others from 6 to 20 tons. It should also be added that there are large pentagonal boats or barges, constructed with huge timbers in the corn-growing districts on the upper part of the river, whence they are towed down each by 15 or 20 men, and then, arrived at their destination, are broken up for building or firewood. Such was the fleet of the Yenesei at the time of the visit of M. Théel.

is the oldest, having been founded in 1618; and the most curious is that of Silovanoff, near Turukhansk. It is inhabited by exiled *Scoptsi*, a fanatical sect whose principal doctrine is based on Matt. xix. 12, who mutilate themselves, and endeavour to persuade others to follow their example. When these people are caught so acting, they are banished.*

It has already been intimated that the aborigines wander over the uninhabited parts of the province. In the south, about Minusinsk, are Tatars, most of whom have embraced the Christianity of the Russian Church. In the north, to the west of the river, are the

* Mr. Seebohm tells me that, as regards material comforts, this village is far in advance of the ordinary Russian villages. He found the land well cultivated and railed off, the cattle kept out by gates, and there was a hospital for the sick. The houses were ventilated, the joining work was good, and there were books. All intoxicants were forbidden, and likewise tobacco and tea and coffee. Morally, in fact, it was a model village and without crime. The inhabitants, however, of whom there were more men than women, had a remarkable appearance. They were all sallow; the men were beardless, with squeaky voices; and no inhabitant was less than forty years of age. A "baby's music" had never been heard among them. They keep all the festivals of the Russian Church, but have no priest. They say that every man is a priest, and that he can perform priestly acts only for himself. They provided Mr. Seebohm, as a guest, with both tea and butter, but the Scoptsi themselves eat no animal food but fish, use no butter and drink no milk. At least this was so originally; but here breaks forth a fact that should be respectfully dedicated to all who suppose it within the bounds of possibility to bring every one, or to keep every one, to the same way of thinking. These people number less than a score, have no one in the village not of their own persuasion, and yet they have split into two sects, the difference being that one drinks milk and the other does not. Originally some 700 or 800 were sent from the government of Perm; but many on the Yenesei were dying, and they petitioned to be removed elsewhere, and are now to be found with other Scoptsi in large numbers in the province of Yakutsk. As to the relative salubrity of these and other Siberian provinces, the only clue that I have is that whereas in 1879 the death-rate in the government of Perm, whence these people came, was 5·07 per cent., it was 4·13 in the province of Tobolsk, 3·89 in that of Irkutsk, and 3·51 in the province of Yeneseisk.

Samoyedes and Ostjaks. West of the river, at the extreme north, are the Yuraks, and below them the Tunguses, which latter wander over a far larger area than any other tribe in Siberia.* Those in the Yene-



OSTJAK WOMEN OF THE YENESEISK PROVINCE.

seisk province give themselves to the care of reindeer

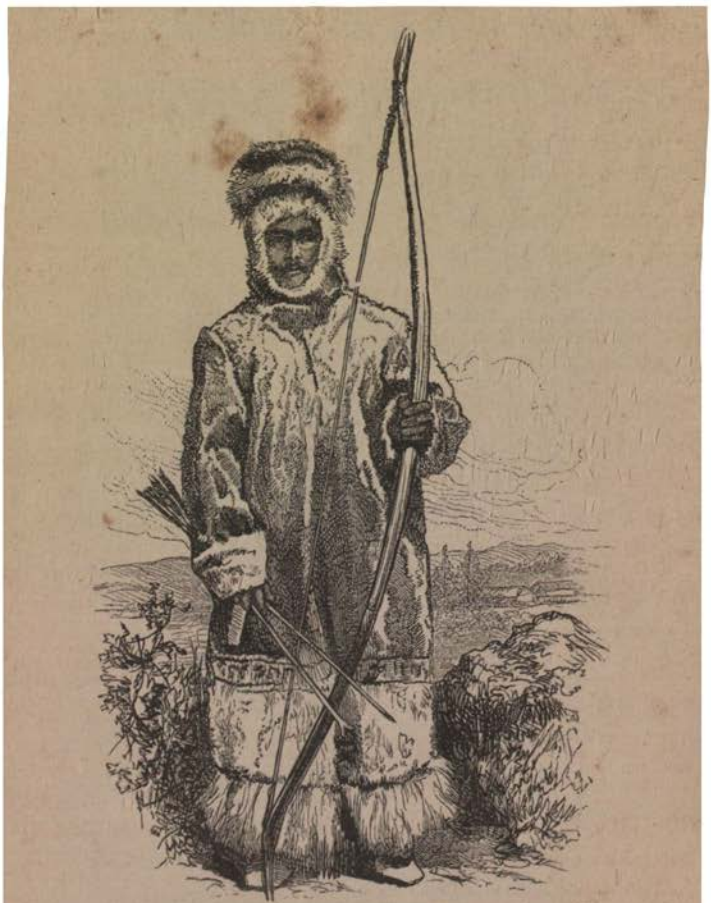
* Dr. Latham observes that, if we take the principal populations that are common to the Russian and Chinese Empires, we find them to be the Turkish, Mongolian, and Tungusian races; the Turk on the west, the Mongol in the middle, and the Tunguse on the east. The Tunguse race begins, he says, north of Peking, and stretches through Manchuria across

and to the chase. M. Théel speaks of them as the most intelligent of the natives on the Yenesei, and says that their rich women, probably wives of chiefs, often wear furs of beaver, sable, and black fox to the value of many hundreds of pounds sterling. He mentions also, as some proof of their intellectual taste, that there was presented to him a hexagonal spindle of ivory, upon which the days, the weeks, and the months were indicated by different signs. He speaks also of a game they had resembling chess, of which all the pieces were of ivory.

Among the principal animals, objects of their chase, are the sable, the common fox, the white fox, the elk, the reindeer, the wolf, the bear, the ermine, and the squirrel. At the beginning of October, and sometimes also of January, they start on snow-shoes. Alone, or in company, the hunter goes into the virgin forest, some hundreds of versts from any habitation, and is followed by a little sledge drawn by dogs. If he finds the track of a sable, he follows, and, on lighting upon the animal, he has not much difficulty in killing it. But the sable often takes refuge in a hole, and then there is nothing to be done but to await his pleasure in coming out; and as this may be by night as

the district of the Amur, and north-east and west to the sea of Okhotsk and to the Yenesei. Of the Tunguse family the Manchu is the most civilized, whilst in Siberia we have them in their extreme character of rude nomads, unlettered, and still pagan, or but imperfectly Christianized. The Tungusian approaches the Mongolian, the Ostjak, or the Eskimo, according as his residence lies north or south; within the limit of the growth of trees or beyond it, on the champaign, the steppe, or the tundra. On the tundra the horse ceases to be his domestic animal, and the reindeer or the dog replaces it. Hence we hear of three divisions of the Tunguse family called by different names, according as they possess horses, reindeer, or dogs.

well as by day, his retreat is covered with fine threads attached to bells, which give the alarm. The hunter may thus have to wait two or three days; but, if he happen to kill the much-coveted animal, his trouble is



YUKAK HUNTSMAN.

well rewarded; for a good sable skin fetches from 50*s.* to £10. In skinning, the coat ought not to be stretched; but, on the contrary, contracted as much as possible, in order to render the hairs more bushy,

which enhances the value. Hence the skins one meets with in commerce are all short and wide.

The common fox is taken with snares and traps. The black fox is very rare in these parts, and its skin is valued up to £100. The white fox is taken on the tundra by means of traps placed on the top of little hills. This animal generally retires south towards the middle of September; and as it is known that the fox, rather than jump over an obstacle, however low, goes round it, the hunters, profiting by this knowledge, set up barriers of branches, leaving openings where they plant their snares, and catch their prey. The hunting of the elk is carried on by men on snow-shoes; and such numbers of this animal are killed that in some years one may buy at Yeneseisk as many as 10,000 skins. Reindeer are taken in numbers equally large, sometimes in traps, and sometimes by driving whole herds into an enclosure, from which they cannot get out.*

One of their modes of capturing the bear in the Yeneseisk province is by fixing a wooden platform to the trunk of a tree, and at such a height from the ground that the bear is forced to stand on his hind-legs at full length to reach the middle. On this platform are numerous barbed iron spikes, and at the higher part a joint of meat. The bear arrives, stands up, and puts forward one paw to seize the bait; but, bringing it down on the spikes, finds it fixed. The furious animal puts down the second to release the

* The horns of these animals are very fine. I was presented with a pair in Archangel, measuring nearly four feet from the skull to the extremities, which are a yard apart. The brow antlers are 13 inches long, and the bes-antlers, or those next above, 16 and 18 inches respectively, whilst the total measurement of antlers and branches is upwards of 14 feet.

first, which also is caught, and he thus becomes an easy prey to the huntsman.

Thus the natives spend their days—fishing in summer and hunting in winter. They have no towns, no villages, no houses, but live in tents of skins or of bark, according to the season; and they have little idea of civilized life, or the mineral wealth with which their country abounds. Iron ore is found in the valley of the Yenesei, and from the province, in 1877, 2,700 tons were cast; also from the mine of graphite, on the Kureika, Captain Wiggins ballasted one of his vessels. The greatest mineral product of the province, however, is gold, of which I shall speak in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XIX.

A VISIT TO A GOLD-MINE.

Gold in Siberia.—Where found.—Gold-hunting.—A prospecting party.—Thawing the ground.—Subterranean passages.—Hardships.—Mining calculations.—Building of barracks.—Preparations for our visit.—Costumes.—Road through the "forest primeval."—Luxuriant vegetation.—Crossing mountains.—Arrival at mine.—Labour of miners.—Gold-washing machine.—Government inspection.—Wages.—Hours of labour.—Miners' food.—Pay-day.—Drink and its follies.—Miners' fortunes.—Mines of Eastern Siberia.—Return to Krasnoiarsk.

NOT many Englishmen, probably, would think of going to Siberia to seek for *El-dorado*, the fabled land of gems and gold. Many tons of precious metals, however, are found there yearly; and there are firms, consisting of only two or three partners, that net an annual income of more than half-a-million sterling. The Russian empire furnishes an eighth part of the gold found yearly throughout the world, and three-fourths of this quantity come from Siberia. It was at the beginning of the century that gold-washing was commenced in the Urals, and a period of great prosperity followed from 1825 to about 1850. Since that time the number of mines has increased, but the profits are less, because, whilst the value of gold has diminished, the price of labour has risen. The sources and affluents of the great Siberian rivers are rich in gold. The districts on the west of Lake Baikal that are most worked are those of Yeneseisk, Irkutsk,

Kansk, Nijni-Udinsk, and the sources of the Lena, which last are the richest.*

Accordingly, when we arrived at Krasnoiarsk, the large town of the Yeneseisk gold-mining district, and made acquaintance with some of the gold-seekers' families, it appeared a good opportunity to visit one of the mines, since they were called "near." It was rather alarming, however, to discover what were the Siberians' notions of the word *near*, for in that huge country 100 miles or more go for nothing—in fact, are a mere trifle, and not too long to be travelled for the sake of a ball or a festive gathering. The gold-seekers' daughters even sometimes go out to their fathers' mines within this distance, and, when they do so, stride their horses in top-boots and knickerbockers to save their dresses being torn in the primeval forest, or, as it is called, the *taiga*. When, therefore, I found that a pair of high boots would be necessary, and that it would involve a long journey on horseback, I rather hesitated. We had, however, been introduced to the Director of the Krasnoiarsk Hospital, Dr. Peacock; and when it appeared that not only he, but Mrs. Peacock also, would join the party, my courage rose, and I determined to go.

But, before we start, let me try to give the reader some idea as to the localities in which the gold is

* East of Lake Baikal are many mines on various rivers, such as the Nertcha, the Ingoda, and the Onon. Another famous river is the Olekma; whilst the Amur produces so much of the precious metal that the yield of some of its valleys is fabulous. I heard, near Albazin, concerning the Upper Amur Gold-mining Company, that for the past ten years they had washed 150 poods of gold annually, which, reckoned at £2,000 a pood—its price during the year of my visit—gives a product of £3,000,000. Also on the Vitim, during the summer of 1878, from 300 to 400 poods, I was told, had been extracted, which represent from £600,000 to £800,000 sterling.

found, and how it is discovered. In the mountainous districts of the forest countless brooks unite into rivulets, which, in accordance with the character of the landscape, have a strong fall, becoming very rapid in the spring, and still more so in the summer, after the melting of the snow. The waters uproot trees, undermine rocks, and sweep along earth, gold, and other metals with resistless fury, till the lowlands are reached, where the stream, having no longer the same force, allows the heavy gold to sink to the bottom, to be covered, perhaps, next season with more gold, or, perhaps, by earth and rubbish. It will be easy to understand, then, how a layer of sand containing gold may be thus formed, and subsequently covered over with beds of earth and stone.

The professional *tayoshnik*, or gold-hunter, has to discover these auriferous layers; but this he cannot do alone.* There must be a prospecting party made up, which may consist, say, of an overseer, a leader, 8 workmen, 10 horses, 18 saddle-bags, provisions, and tools, the whole of which may be estimated to cost £500, which amount has to be risked, for the party may go out into the taiga and find nothing, or what may prove worse than nothing.†

* Any one, indeed, may go into the uninhabited *taiga* to seek for gold (as the hunter may penetrate the same dismal region in search of game), provided, that is, he have a certificate from the mining officers, which he may get by giving proofs of good citizenship from the local authorities among whom he resides. He is then at liberty, when he has found gold, to hire the land from the Government for the purposes of mining.

† A party of this kind will go where, perhaps, the foot of man has never trodden. Fortunate is the *tayoshnik* if he have by his side a faithful native who can direct; otherwise he throws himself into a labyrinth of small valleys and hills, intersected in all directions by rushing mountain streams. He has no path to guide him save the course

The tayoshnik knows, however, that the Siberian gold deposits are almost always to be met with on the banks of streams, or in their beds. Again, gold is often hidden in crevices of the earth that have evidently once served as channels for running water. Moreover, he knows that those rivers that wash up gold are always such as have their sources in ravines, the rocks of which are very much weather-beaten. Gold is rarely found at precipitous spots, and is most abundant where the water ages ago had a calmer current, and consequently no longer possessed the necessary strength to carry the heavy metal along.*

The hunter must, however, dig some depth beneath the surface, the thickness of the beds of earth covering the gold varying from 2 to 20 feet, though it increases sometimes to 150 feet. At some spots three or four gold deposits, or *plasts*, as they are called, lie one over the other, separated by thick strata of earth and rocks, in which case the lowest of the plasts is generally the richest.†

of the rivers, often no compass save the sun, and in this manner he travels —mounted, perhaps, on a small Siberian pony, or, in the far north, on the back of a reindeer. In situations where it is impossible for him to make use of small sledges drawn by reindeer on the frozen rivers, he has to run on snow-shoes, everywhere encountering hardship and dangers, with certain death in store for him should he lose his way.

* Large rivers hardly ever carry gold with them, and when in exceptional cases they do, the treasure cannot be recovered, since to turn the water from its channel would be too great an expense. The shape of the gold grains gives some idea of its previous history and travels. Are the particles flat and thin? Then they have been dragged over sand and rocks. Are they round like grains? Then they have been in some whirlpool, participants in a mad circling dance. Or, once more, are they fine dust particles, with here and there a larger piece, or with various minerals attached—particularly quartz, their original home? Then in this last shape the gold has probably had a comfortable and quiet journey.

† The *plasts* vary from 3 inches to 15 feet, and their composition varies

With knowledge of this kind, therefore, the gold-hunter proceeds till he arrives at a valley along which he judges some ancient river ages ago may have rolled down its golden sands. He then seeks in the bed of the rivulet for pyrites, iron, slate-clay, or quartz with a thick coat of crystals; and at length he forms a judgment as to whether or not he is likely by digging to find a gold deposit. If his verdict be favourable, then all hands are set to work to cut down trees and build a rude log hut, in which the party may have to live for months. The next business is to dig a number of holes or trenches at a distance from each other, to get down to the auriferous layers—that is, if there are any; for if there be none, their labour of course is lost, and they have to try elsewhere. But if there be auriferous layers, it is no easy matter to get to them, for gold-hunting is usually followed in the winter, often with the thermometer many degrees below zero, and when the ground is so hard as not to be pierced even by a pickaxe; they have, therefore, to make huge bonfires, whereby the earth is softened, so as to allow trenches of considerable depth to be dug. This manœuvre has to be repeated until the longed-for gold is found, or unyielding stone presents an impenetrable obstacle.*

These trenches or holes are made under the super-

considerably. Blue clay, coarse sand, quartz, clay-slate, limestone, granite, and syenite occur frequently, as well as iron in the most various combinations; and, more rarely, ferruginous red clay. This last is very tough, and in the rainy season causes the workmen no little difficulty. In return, however, it contains a good deal of gold. In the district of the Olekma the gold deposit rests on a bed of firm rock.

* In many localities it is in the cold season only that the trenches can be dug with advantage. In summer they would be quickly flooded. Even in the winter the water must be fought against, and there are some places where the earth is dug out from under frozen rivers.

intendence of the overseer. Samples of the earth are constantly tried, and so guidance is obtained as to the direction in which other work should be begun, and some idea formed as to the depth and breadth of the beds of gold. Often, however, the metal lies so far beneath the surface that it would scarcely be possible to dig out all the trenches begun. In such cases the wider ones are sunk into wells or shafts, and subterranean passages are made.*

Thus the work of testing a locality may take some little time; meanwhile the workmen and overseer live in their wretched hut, which often is not well roofed, and heated only by a portable stove. The wind whistles through the cracks of the moss-calked walls, an insupportable heat reigns in the vicinity of the stove, while, on the opposite walls, icicles gleam like brilliants, and melting snow falls from above. The air is rendered poisonous by the exhalations of the inmates and the vapour ascending from damp clothing hung near the fire to dry. In fact, as the workmen say, the atmosphere is thick enough "to hang up an axe in." However, in the wilderness, even such a shelter is a longed-for refuge when a fierce snowstorm is raging and the thermometer has sunk to far below zero.

But the climate is not the only hardship the gold-hunter has to encounter. His provisions consist of black rusks, dried meat, tea, and a little brandy; and

* These are the beginning of the so-called gold-*mines*. The subterranean work, which is carried on principally during the winter months, does not differ much from the ordinary work of the miner. Poisonous vapours do not usually occur, but, when cutting through clay-slate, the presence of sulphate of cobalt has sometimes an injurious effect. The passages are nine feet wide and high, and two labourers generally work from two to three tons of sand per day. The sand thus accumulated during the winter is thrown up into heaps and washed in the summer.

often he does not possess as much as could be wished even of this meagre fare, for he is obliged to carry with it all requisite tools and weapons on his beasts of burden, and communication with civilized centres or depôts is usually difficult, and in spring sometimes impossible. My interpreter told me he had an uncle, who was a *tayoshnik*, who made an income of about £1,000 a year, but had sometimes, for want of better food, to eat bear's flesh.

But supposing the overseer to have discovered a promising spot, and to have tested the earth from several holes, he can then strike an average as to the amount of gold that may be got from every hundred poods—that is, every 32 cwt., or say every ton and a half—of sand. If the amount be five *zolotniks*,—say, $\frac{3}{4}$ oz., this is thought rich; if less than $\frac{1}{8}$ oz. it is very poor; sometimes, however, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of gold even is found to 100 poods of sand. The overseer has next to calculate whether it will pay to work the mine.*

If, when all things are calculated, the land promises to pay, he sticks up two posts, one on each end of the area he has chosen, despatches a courier to his employer, and the place is registered at once by the commissary of police or other competent authority from the local Direction of Mines. The area is then thoroughly surveyed by a Government surveyor, who makes a map of the spot, and, when all is secured to

* He must reckon the quantity of earth and rubbish to be removed before he gets to the gold sand, also the number of labourers necessary to be brought to the place, and food to keep them; and, further, he must consider what will be the summer level of the stream on which his claim lies, because without the proper supply of water the machinery cannot be set in motion, and to put up an artificial water conduit would be too expensive.

the finder, the proprietor can at once borrow money on the security of his mine, paying at the rate of from 20 to 30 per cent., according as money is scarce or plentiful. Many capitalists, content with this interest, employ all their money in this way.*

The next thing is to build the necessary houses and barracks for the future manager of the mine and his workmen, the number of which may vary from 10 to 2,000. Provisions and fuel provided, then the digging begins about the middle of February, and the washing about the 1st of May, the operations being over on the 10th of September, or, if the weather be unusually fine, on the 1st of November. When a mine has been registered, it *must* be worked to some extent, or it is forfeited to the Crown. The owner, however, may sell it if he pleases, but it must not remain idle.

It was to a mine that had been opened the same year that we were to start from Krasnoiarsk. It was called the Archangel Gabriel mine, and was situated on the river Slisneva, at a spot nearly 30 miles from the Yenesei. Our worthy doctor arrayed himself for the occasion in the costume of a Tyrolese hunter, with a double gun over his shoulders, a revolver and bowie-knife in his belt, and a huntsman's horn; for he hoped, he said, that we might chance to meet with a bear—a hope that I cannot say was shared by all the party. I know at least of one who hoped we should *not* meet with a bear. However, it was by no means unlikely,

* An area consists of a piece of land about 3½ miles long, the breadth being determined by the distance between the two mountains in which the gold-seam lies. This is generally from 500 to 1,000 feet. No one can occupy more than three consecutive miles; but a wife, a friend, or partner, having a certificate, may take the adjoining three miles, and then the three miles below may be taken, and so on to any extent.

and I accordingly armed Mr. Interpreter with our revolver. Madame Peacock wore a black velvet hat, a magenta chemisette, a brown tweed tunic, black knickerbockers, and top boots; and thus, with a few provisions, we started in the afternoon to cross the Yenesei to the village of Basaïka. The water was more than 20 feet higher than it had risen for 30 years, the ferry had been washed away, and the force of the stream carried down our boat a good mile ere we reached the opposite bank; and then, after wading through a great deal of mud and water, in doing which we learned to appreciate high boots, we reached the village, and took refreshment before mounting our steeds. We then advanced in single file from the village through the cultivated bottom-land, and afterwards through much grass, that was very like penetrating a forest of herbs, to which our horses took kindly, for they had scarcely to stoop their heads to nibble their fodder. Although the summer was young, there were to be seen the acacia in blossom, currants, and raspberries; and among flowers, the bitter vetch, the spiræa, anemones, Flora's bell, high pæonies, aconite, or wolf's bane, and large dragon-mouths; also abundance of ferns, among them one strongly resembling the *Osmunda regalis*, and the magnificent *Struthiopteris germanica*, which attains to gigantic growth in Siberia; and even the trunks of the trees and the granite rocks were covered with a rich variety of lichens and verdant mosses.

Thus far, therefore, everything was going well. The evening was delightful, and all were in excellent spirits. Soon, however, our guide turned into the forest, and we had before us the first of two mountains over whose

backs we were to climb, thinking to reach our destination by nightfall. At this point we began to get some idea of what is meant by "the forest primeval," for sometimes the way was all but impassable by reason of masses of shattered-down dry wood; now our horses stepped over fallen trees, and now waded knee-deep up the beds of rivulets; in some places we met with snow-white skeletons of dead trees with branching arms; in others the way, indicated by notches on the trees, had been cut with an axe.

As we mounted higher and higher, we had before us a fine, bold, rocky mountain, lit up with the sinking sun. My companions called to me to look back, and we had a splendid view of the noble Yenesei at sunset, of its verdant bottom-lands on either side, its impetuous stream, and magnificent forests.

We then prepared for our first descent. But it became dusk, and the overshadowing trees made our difficulty the greater. My horse, however, seemed to know so well what he was about, that I was minded to keep my seat and hope for the best. But when all my companions, including Madame and the guide, had dismounted, and advised me to do the same if I valued my neck, I followed suit till the valley was reached. We then remounted for a short distance, by which time it was quite dark, and for a short space some of the party were lost to the others. All came right, however, towards midnight, when we saw afar off the glimmering of a candle. This we hailed with a lusty blast of the doctor's horn, thinking to awake the inhabitants. Our coming had not been expected, but letters from the owners of the mine secured us attention, and such hospitality as the place afforded. "Let

us have the samovar," said the doctor; "and bring a good large one, please, for we shall empty it."

And he was true to his word; for although they brought a twenty-glass samovar, it went out empty. Russians, however, be it remembered, think nothing of drinking from eight to a dozen glasses of tea, and we were in need of refreshment!

Then came the question of sleep. They had but one room to offer us. Madame, therefore, lay on what might be called by courtesy a sofa. The bedstead was politely given to me, and the doctor and interpreter lay on the floor. Thus we managed to rest till about five in the morning, when we were called. Our toilets had to be speedily arranged, and our faces washed with a handful or two of water outside the door, for there was no sort of washing apparatus to be seen. After some tea and rusks, we started to witness the working of the gold-mine.

I had seen the Swedish iron-mines of Dannemora, and had gone down a copper-mine in the Urals; but the gold-mine was something new. There was no underground work going on, and no digging of holes and sending up the earth to be washed; but the whole surface had been laid bare. Hence the work resembled that of English navvies making a cutting. There were a number of small carts drawn by Siberian horses, and men with pickaxes and shovels filling them. When full, the carts were drawn up an incline to a platform, and emptied into one end of a large iron cylinder, resembling a coffee-roaster, with holes all round it. This was made to rotate by water-power, and the large stones and pebbles were, by the formation and turning of the cylinder, tumbled out at the end. Here

they were duly watched, so that no nuggets should be overlooked. At the same time several streams of water were poured into the cylinder, and the earth and small pebbles, passing through the holes, fell into a long wooden apron, inclined at an angle of 35°, with moveable boxes or "pockets."

In order that we might see how the gold was washed, the manager caused some of these pockets to be emptied on to an inclined plane of clean wood, raised at either side, and over which ran equably and slowly a stream of clear water. One of the pockets (called *dundofka*) was then emptied on the higher part of the plane, and the water soon washed away the mud, the man who performed the washing having a wooden scraper, like that of a scavenger, with which he pushed back the descending grains of gold. This was repeated till six poods, or say 200 lbs., of washed earth had been placed on the board. After the mud and sand had been allowed to roll away, a brush was used instead of the scraper, and there remained behind perhaps a small teaspoonful of gold-dust, or as much as was roughly valued at from 40*s.* to 50*s.* The gold was then placed in a miniature frying-pan, and held over a small fire to dry, after which it was put into what resembled a "poor-box." This was done in the presence of a Government official, of whom there is always one at every mine, and who is usually a Cossack officer.*

* It is his duty to supervise the washing of the gold, which is placed in a coffer, locked by the proprietor, and sealed by the Government agent, the quantity of gold washed at each operation being entered in a register. If they find a quarter of an ounce of gold to a ton and a half of sand, then 200 men can wash from four to five pounds of gold a day. I heard, however, of a mine to the south of Yeneseisk, where they usually found from 15 to 20 lbs., and sometimes even up to 36 lbs. a day. Gold thus found is not always pure, but is frequently mixed with magnetic iron, which is

The gold thus gained is eventually poured into bags of coarse linen, which, after having been stamped with the brand of the mine, are sewn in leather sacks* and taken to Irkutsk or Barnaul, where it is assayed; and afterwards there is deducted the tax of from 5 to 10 per cent., according to the quantity. Gold assignats are given in exchange, payable in six months, or they may be cashed at the Government bank at a discount of 7 per cent. per annum. Thus all the gold found in the country is claimed by the Government, and it is unlawful for any person to have gold-dust in his possession unknown to the authorities.

After we had seen the manner of washing the gold we walked into the barracks, the hospital, stables, and the houses for the 200 or 300 workmen. I have spoken of the hardships that are endured by a prospecting party. Yet, despite all their privations and dangers, there is never a lack of persons who volunteer their services to wealthy projectors, for they receive large wages. The overseer who discovers the mine generally stipulates that he shall receive from 1 to 5 per cent. on the yield; and the percentage given to some of the others on a lucky find is very liberal. The ordinary labourers, too, such as we saw, are well paid.

drawn off by a magnet. Nor is the metal all of the same colour. In some places it is found very dark, and often still covered by a crust of oxide of iron; in other places it is of a very light colour, and contains silver.

* Each bag contains about 50 lbs. of gold. Two of these, further protected by a covering of thick felt, constitute the load for one horse. To the two bags are fastened a long cord and a piece of dry wood, so that, in the event of the horses' burdens being washed away while crossing a swollen river, the floating wood would indicate the whereabouts of the sunken treasure. In the middle of June, or at the end of the season, the departure of loads of gold from the mine is accompanied with pistol-firing and the booming of cannon, and cheers and blessings bid the caravan *bon voyage.*

Among them, of course, is a great variety of races and people. There meet at the mines the nobleman and the Siberian peasant; the former officer of the army and the pardoned convict; the Pole, the German, the Tatar, and numberless others, who work in common, now freezing in the icy blasts of winter, and now scorching in the heat of the summer sun. They work intensely hard (sometimes from 3 a.m. to 7 p.m.), and observe no Sundays or saints' days, excepting that of the patron saint of the mine. But in most cases they have wholesome food, warm quarters, and attention in sickness.

Some of them, however, run away. It happens occasionally that a man may have secreted gold, with which he gets off as early as possible; and some, not reckoning aright the difficulties of travelling so far alone, have been found starved, the useless gold clutched in the grasp of lifeless fingers. We found some attention paid to what might be called the fanaticism of the Mohammedan workmen; the Tatars being placed alone, and convenience being afforded them to cook their food in their own way. A separate barrack, too, was assigned to married men with their wives. Over an outdoor fire hung a large caldron, big enough to boil a donkey—the largest I had ever seen. This, I presumed, was for cooking the meat; and in the bake-house we saw abundance of rye bread, of which some of the men eat 7 lbs. in a day. Their beverages are tea and quass. It is forbidden by law to sell spirituous liquors at the mines. Only the managers have the right to keep them in their possession, though this sensible regulation is often evaded by contrabandists.

When the 10th of September arrives, and the workmen receive their pay, they break forth into the wildest

excesses. Before leaving the mine, each labourer gets a ticket, setting forth what he is to receive, which may vary from £20 to £50. This ticket he has to present some miles away at his employer's office, and there, awaiting him outside, are merchants and dealers, who manage soon to empty his pockets. He too frequently begins by drinking; and then the man who has toiled harder than a slave for months is often at a loss to know upon what objects and follies to lavish his money.

Captain Wiggins says that he never witnessed among the Siberian miners such scenes of depravity and disorder as may be witnessed among the Australian and Californian miners, or even, at times, in the low streets of English seaport towns. Another Englishman, however, has told me a different story, to the effect that one miner, for instance, will take a common woman and clothe her in satin and velvet, and then, a week after, when money is gone, will tear the clothes from her back to raise capital for drink. Another, of a vain turn of mind, buys bottles of champagne, and sticks them up in a row to throw stones at; a third will buy a piece of printed cotton, or other material, lay it down in the dirty road, and, to indulge his aristocratic tread, will walk on it; whilst a fourth, despising to be drawn by horses, will yoke to his *telega* his fellow-fools who have spent their money, and so be drawn by human beings. The end of this, of course, is that their money is speedily gone; and now comes the opportunity of the masters for the following year, since they know that they shall want the men again, and labour is scarce. Employers, therefore, advance them money, and the poor sots start off to walk, perhaps, 500 miles to their homes or friends, where, having

arrived, they must needs return in a few months to begin the labours of another season.

The managers of mines, some of whom make £1,000 a year, congregate in the winter in the towns, where much drinking and card-playing goes on. If capitalists are fortunate, they can make and keep large fortunes. Two gold-seekers in Krasnoiarsk are reputed to have found, in about 10 years, 1,000 poods of gold, of the value, say, of £2,000,000 sterling. We dined at the house of one of these men.*

But to return to the Archangel Gabriel mine. After we had looked at the buildings, and seen what else there was of interest, we returned to a breakfast of beefsteaks, left some books for the workmen, and then, mounting our steeds, returned towards Krasnoiarsk; and, seeing that four persons similarly attired might not meet again for awhile, I proposed that, on reaching the town, we should be photographed in a group. This was done; and so ended one of the pleasantest *détours* of our journey.

* There are, or were, some rich gold-mine proprietors at Kiakhta. One firm there, consisting of three partners, washed in one year enough gold to give a net profit of £600,000; they expected the year after to make £1,000,000; and the Government surveyor calculated that at that rate the mine would last 50 years. Thus many fortunes are realized in Siberia; but hardly a month passes without chronicling some one's ruin, which may often be attributed to the fast life and gaming propensities of the miners. Hence, although between the years 1833 and 1870 about 30,000 poods of gold were sent out of Eastern Siberia alone, to the value of £50,000,000, the finding of which gave employment in some years to upwards of 30,000 workmen, yet it will be seen from the foregoing that this great wealth has not proved an unmixed blessing, for the discovery of a gold-mine never brings to it a population permanently thriving and industrious.

CHAPTER XX.

FROM KRASNOIARSK TO ALEXANDREFFSKY.

Situation of Krasnoiarsk.—Our hotel.—Dr. Peacock.—Visit to prison, hospital, and madhouse.—Cathedral.—Drive in "Rotten Row."—Shoeing horses.—Bible affairs at Krasnoiarsk.—Consignment to Governor for provinces of Yeneseisk and Yakutsk.—Departure from Krasnoiarsk.—Change of scenery.—Kansk *Okrug*.—Our arrival anticipated.—Visit to Ispravnik.—Statistics of crime.—The Protopope of Kansk.—Parochial information.—Demand for Scriptures.—A travelling companion.—Further posting help.—Butterflies and mosquitoes.—Nijni Udinsk.—Telma factory.—A *détour*.—Alexandreffsky.

SIBERIA, immense as it is, has only 17 towns with a population of more than 5,000 inhabitants, and of these large towns Krasnoiarsk, with a population of 13,000, is a fair specimen. It derives its name from the Russian words *krasnoi*, red, and *yar*, a cliff, in allusion to the red-coloured marl of the banks on which the town is situated; its houses being built on the tongue of land at the confluence of the Yenesei and the Kacha. On the south the plain stretches away for nine versts, and on the south-west a range of blue hills is descried, which betray their rocky character by sharp and picturesque outlines. The opposite bank, too, of the Yenesei has, amidst forest scenery, some fine rocks, one of which, of curious formation, called the Tokmak, rises to the dignity of a mount. The Siberians, therefore, are justified, to a

considerable degree, in claiming for Krasnoiarsk that it is picturesquely situated. It was certainly the prettiest spot we had thus far seen; and since we made there some pleasant acquaintances, and received much kindness from the people, it naturally lingers in the memory as one of the bright spots of our journey.*

Having arrived early on the morning of the 24th June, we drove to what is called an hotel, kept by one "Shlyaktin," where we engaged the best room in the house for two shillings a day, with two bedsteads, for which, as usual in Russia, we provided our own pillows and linen. Other things were proportionately cheap: turkeys 3*s.* a pair; a whole calf, nine months old, from 3*s.* to 4*s.*; geese from 1*s.* 8*d.* to 2*s.* 6*d.* a couple; but pheasants, brought hundreds of miles from Tashkend, cost 6*s.* a brace.

We had not entered many minutes before several beggars came to the window to solicit alms, which seemed to be their method of honouring all newcomers; and if they received anything they crossed themselves, and no doubt blessed us.†

Krasnoiarsk boasts of a Lutheran chapel, though it

* Owing to the formation of the hills about the town, Krasnoiarsk is more than ordinarily favoured with abundance of wind, which in winter blows the snow off the ground and stops sledging. One night during our stay it rained, and the streets were in a condition next morning such as I have never seen before or since. To speak of "puddles" would be a mockery, and "ponds" is barely the word to use; whilst to cross the street was to run imminent risk of losing one's boots. Fortunately, however, there were droshkies at hand, and in these we waded through water nearly up to the horses' knees.

† We saw beggars here and at Tomsk, but I do not recollect that they were numerous or particularly importunate. The Russians are, however, in this sense, very charitable. It is customary not only to give a few kopecks to such as these, but also to the old men posted at the entrances of the villages, who have charge of the gates placed across the roads to keep cattle from straying in or out.

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is without a resident pastor. We made it our business to go there first, thinking to find a catechist, Mr. Adamson, for whom we had a letter. He was away, however, and was represented by an old German woman. Whether she recognized in us kindred spirits, I know not, but she cried as she shook our hands and bade us God-speed.

We then accompanied Dr. Peacock, who took us first to see the prison,* and afterwards the large hospital, through which pass annually about 2,500 patients. A part of it serves as a madhouse, in which were 48 inmates, 42 of whom were exiles, 28 being pronounced incurable. From inquiries I made, I did not gather that medical opinion went so far as to say that banishment drove people mad; but it seemed that many so afflicted were exiled as prisoners who ought rather to have been in lunatic asylums as idiots; such, for instance, was the case of one man who had been sent to Siberia for setting houses on fire, and who, on arriving, repeated his offence, saying that he did it "for fun." †

* It was one of the *perisylnie* character, having 46 wards, and a hospital with sixteen rooms. There were 26 murderers in the place, and the number of persons committing this crime yearly in the district seemed to me, from the round numbers they gave, to be very high. The sentences of murderers, they said, varied from five or six to 20 years' hard labour, after which time they were free as exiles. The general arrangements of the prison appeared to be fairly good. I thought it clean and well ordered; and we were struck, in the bake-house, with the enormous size of their loaves of bread, some of them weighing from 40 to 50 lbs.

† In the Tomsk hospital we had seen two persons mad from the effects of alcoholic drink; and I was sorry to hear it asserted afterwards, by a Russian medical man, that the proportion of those in Siberia who went mad from *delirium tremens* was greater than in England; and he further remarked of his countrymen, that though for a long time they indulge in no intoxicating liquor, yet when they once drink they do so furiously. A friend of mine had more than one man-servant who acted

The hospital building had been originally erected as a private residence by a rich gold-seeker.* How far, in its altered condition, the house suits the purpose of a hospital, I could not judge; for in Russia they have a habit, in summer, of turning the patients out under temporary sheds and tents whilst the buildings are being repaired for the winter; and this was the state of affairs at Krasnoiarsk during our inspection. But I am afraid the building is not all that could be desired. At Tomsk we had seen a summer tent-hospital for 20 men with typhus fever.

Krasnoiarsk has a cathedral, presided over by the Bishop of Yeneseisk, and four or five churches, one of which was built at a cost of £70,000 by a rich gold-seeker, by name, I think, Kusnitzoff, which, be it known to English readers, means "Smith." We made the acquaintance of two of his daughters during our voyage on the Obi. They had been spending the winter in Petersburg, and were then travelling a distance of 3,000 miles to spend the summer in Siberia. This was their usual practice. One of these ladies had travelled to England, had even crossed the Atlantic to America, and we were glad to renew our acquaintance at Krasnoiarsk. Theirs was one of the best of the private houses, on entering which a broad flight of steps led to the upper storey, where was a drawing-

in this manner. They did *not* drink for months, and then all of a sudden did so without ceasing, and would be mad drunk for a week or ten days. At last, exhausted, they slept for a day or two, and woke up abashed, promising to do so no more; but, alas! it was only till the next time.

* It is the same, I suspect, as that mentioned by Mr. Hill in his "Travels in Siberia," 30 years ago, the dimensions of which he gives as 131 feet long by 98 broad and 52 high. It is of two storeys, and in Mr. Hill's time was furnished after the most elegant mode of Petersburg. The articles brought from that capital alone cost its owner from £6,000 to £7,000.

room, or rather a ball-room, containing two grand pianos, the walls being hung with European oil-paintings, and where, among other curiosities, we were shown three nuggets of gold, each of which must have weighed several pounds, but serving no purpose but to be looked at, save that a natural indentation in one had been used on certain grand occasions as a cigar-boat. In front of the house was an enclosure, full of shrubs, dahlias, and flowers; but it was manifest that horticultural operations were carried on with difficulty. The Siberians do more with flowers in their rooms, thus adding much to their beauty.

We dined at this house, and afterwards were taken for a drive. The plain running south of the town is the "Rotten Row" of Krasnoiarsk; and here we saw a fair Amazon, of good position, and the mother, by-the-bye, of three children, with hair cut short behind, sitting astride her horse, in knickerbockers and high boots. It was the only instance we saw of this, however; and further east, on the Amur, I met with a lady in a riding-habit that would have been becoming enough even in Hyde Park.

We drove some distance up the bank of the Yenesei, intending to visit a monastery a few miles distant, but were stopped by the unusual height of the floods, and returned to pass through the two handsome squares in the middle of the town, and the smaller streets which cross the principal roads at right angles. We passed a public garden, also given by Mr. Kusnitzoff to the town. We walked there in the evening, leaving the carriages at the gates, as did several fashionables, and found inside a place for refreshments, rooms for cards, and a promenade. As we strolled about

among the trees and shrubs I asked how long they had been there, and found they were self-planted, and that the garden was an adaptation from nature. Close at hand were blacksmiths' forges, where they were shoeing horses in a curious manner.*

Before leaving our lady friends, their hospitality took a very practical turn, as Siberian hospitality generally does, for they gave us some excellent fresh butter and a jar of marmalade. Both these were of great value, and I was particularly thankful to get the latter. In order to prevent the possibility of being reduced to black bread between Krasnoiarsk and Irkutsk, we ordered to be baked a pile, three feet high, of large, flat, white loaves, with a little butter added to prevent their getting dry; and these lasted us for 600 miles.

I was anxious to open at Krasnoiarsk a depôt or an agency for the sale of the Scriptures, and, with that intent, presented an introduction at the shop of one of the principal tradesmen. We found a large store full of all manner of wares, among which, however, it was difficult to see anything small that was particularly Siberian, though I bought a string of beads, worn round the neck by Russian peasant girls, called a *gaitan*. Unfortunately the merchant was away, and I could not hear of another house of business suitable

* Outside the smithy stood four stout posts, fixed in the ground at the four corners, as it were, of an oblong figure, which posts were connected at the top by cross-pieces. Into the midst of these the horse was led. Girths were then put under him by which he could be all but lifted off the ground, suspended to the cross-beams. To prevent his kicking unadvisedly, two of his legs were bound with rope to the nearest of the posts; and thus rendered helpless, and standing on tiptoe with his remaining legs he was shod. They said that Siberian horses are too wild to allow of their being treated in English fashion, and it may be so, but the animals seemed to be equally averse to the other plan.

for what I wanted. Dr. Peacock, however, seemed to feel so strongly the importance of making the most of an opportunity to get the Scriptures circulated in the neighbourhood that he purchased 250 copies, intending to dispense them far and near. I gave him also a supply of reading matter for his hospital patients.*

Having thus spent four agreeable days at the capital of the Yeneseisk province, we left on the evening of the 27th June, with a journey before us of 600 miles to Irkutsk.† We met with an early adventure on reaching the opposite bank of the river; for we had omitted to get a special note from the post-master, without which the post-boys, waiting with their horses, would not take us on. Mr. Interpreter, therefore, at a cost of 8*s.*, and not without danger, had to spend half the night in recrossing the river and returning, whilst I "camped out" alone in the tarantass on the river's bank. I was so stiff and tired, however, with the previous night's journey to the gold-mine, that I slept soundly till, at early dawn, horses were procured, and we jogged onwards.

We had now entered a land of valleys and hills instead of a country of marshes or plains, and the scenery improved vastly. Not so, however, the road-side fare; for milk was less abundant, and consequently

* The Governor was away, but the Vice-Governor informed us that there were six prisons in the province, for which we left him upwards of 200 New Testaments and Scripture portions, and about the same number of tracts, papers, and broad-sheets. We subsequently saw the Governor at Irkutsk, and I have since heard from him that these Scriptures, etc., have been distributed as I wished, as also a further quantity I left with him to be forwarded to the prisons and hospitals of the immense province of Yakutsk.

† Since this chapter was written, Krasnoiarsk has been almost entirely destroyed by fire.

we could not so easily get curds or such diet, nor even milk to drink. But we were so anxious to get forward that we became somewhat impatient of the long time spent in heating the *samovar* and preparing for a meal. The consequence was that if, on arriving at a station, horses were to be had at once, we did as best we could about food, eating in the tarantass as we went along, and sometimes not having more than one "square meal" a day.

For a time we travelled well. We continued to go up and down hills, some of which we estimated at about 500 feet in height; and though there was usually a sufficiency of horses, yet for the first two stages they failed us. We paid a little more than post fares, and hired private steeds instead. The peasants sometimes took advantage of the occasion, when post-horses failed, to ask double fares; but as this exorbitant demand amounted to only about 2*d.* a mile for each horse, it seemed better to do this for a stage than to be detained, perhaps for several hours, and then to get tired animals.

Having left Krasnoiarsk late on Friday night, we reached Kansk in good time on Sunday morning, where we spent the rest of the day, considerably fatigued with the combined effect of the recent horse-riding, tarantass driving, and insufficient rest and food. Kansk is the chief town of an *okrug*, or district, and the residence of an intelligent *Ispravnik;* and, as it possessed a small prison and hospital, we washed, dressed in our "Sunday best," and called upon this dignitary to present our letters. He told us, to our surprise, that he had received a telegram the day before from the acting Governor-General of Irkutsk,

directing him to help us forward as much as possible; and consequently he had sent east and west to all the stations in his district—a distance of nearly 200 miles—telling them to let us have horses quickly. We were rather at a loss to account for such unexpected kindness, and the more so as the Ispravnik thought the instructions had originally been sent from Petersburg. It served, however, to remind us that we were not lost sight of at head-quarters. The Ispravnik accompanied us to the prison, in which were 146 prisoners in 29 rooms, which had a Sunday look about them. Things were brushed up and "settled," as a housekeeper would say, and we distributed papers to the prisoners to read. We also gave the Ispravnik some copies of the New Testament and other reading material for the prison, for the town hospital, and for the schools of the neighbourhood; after which he invited us to his house to drink tea.

His wife was a German, which accounted for certain foreign tastes visible about the room, and for some of the pictures. We learned that the Ispravnik holds a similar position in his district or *okrug*, or circle, that a Governor does in his province,—the pay of an Ispravnik being from £100 to £150 per annum; that of a Governor from £600 to £1,000 per annum; and of a Governor-General about £3,000, the latter two having also furnished houses. The *okrug* of Kansk was 200 miles in diameter, and had a population of 40,000, with upwards of 900 miles of roads. These were kept in order by 9,000 men, each of whom was responsible for 90 fathoms of way; and it is only fair to say that we found the roads of Yeneseisk the best in Siberia. Nearly all the crime in the district, we

were told, is traceable to drink; and that which ended in murder commonly arose from love affairs.*

Prisoners of all sorts were allowed to hold correspondence with their friends; but the prison chief, or the Ispravnik, might object to any part of what was written, and send it back to the writer, though even then the latter might appeal to the Governor-General. Letters usually came, we found, by every post, so that the prisoners evidently availed themselves to a considerable extent of their privilege.

After leaving the Ispravnik, we called on the Protopope, or head priest of the place. His house had a superior look about it, and so had the Protopope himself. He gave us a hearty reception, and we asked a few questions concerning his parish. It appeared that he had 2,000 parishioners, living in Kansk and four surrounding villages. He thought about 100 could read, and for these he very readily accepted papers

* The statistics of crime in the *okrug*, in the year 1878, revealed that, of 182 criminals, not one was less than 17 years of age; 26 men and 5 women were between 17 and 21; but the greatest number of criminals—63 men and 20 women—were of ages ranging from 21 to 33; after which the numbers of men became fewer as they grew older, but there was not a similar decrease in the number of older women. Below the ages of 45 and 70 there were more women criminals than men. It appeared, too, that there were 129 married criminals as against 53 unmarried. Again, 112 were of the Russian Church, 19 of other Christian denominations, 34 were Jews, and 17 of other non-Christian religions. Further, 157 were criminals for the first offence, 22 for the same offence once repeated, and 3 for the same offence twice repeated. This last fact compares favourably with our English criminal statistics, which show many who go in and out of prison a hundred times. I have spoken elsewhere of the long-period prisoners having sometimes to wait in durance for their trial. This may often be avoided by furnishing bail. In 1878 there were in Kansk 415 on bail as against 96 under detention. Of these, 88 were found innocent, 93 were dismissed as "not proven," and 147 sent elsewhere for trial; whilst of those found guilty, 7 only were condemned to the mines, 26 to hard labour in prison, and the remaining 149 to a "house of detention."

and tracts. He had an elementary boys' school, which was supported by the community, the scholars paying nothing. I asked about his congregations, and found that from 300 to 400 usually came to church on Sundays, but that on festivals the number rose to 1,000 or 1,500, and of these about 300 or 400 in the course of the year received the Communion.*

This chief pastor of the place told us he had often bestowed books on the prisoners, but that the books had disappeared. He gave us some idea of the desire there is for the Scriptures in remote parts of Siberia, by saying that on one occasion he bought 200 New Testaments and took them to Minusinsk, where he sold them in a single day at a rouble each.†

In further illustration of the demand for Scriptures in this part of the country, I may mention that, on the way from Tomsk, I made it a practice to go into the post-stations; and whilst my companion was arranging

* A lady on the Obi told me that all were bound to confess and receive the Communion once a year. If any special reason required it, they might receive oftener, always confessing, however, beforehand, in a standing posture at the side of the priest, and then kneeling at the absolution. The priest said that 200 times in the year, at Kansk, children were participants in the sacred rite; and in connection with this remark he made a curious statement, to the effect that, there being few doctors in the district, it was common for mothers, when their babies were ill, to bring them to receive the Sacrament, under the impression that it did them physical as well as spiritual good. He said, too, that mothers thought it their duty to bring their children frequently to Communion till they were seven years of age, after which period they came with them once a year for confession, communion, and instruction.

† This compared favourably with the sales at the Bible Society's depôt at Tomsk, which is the only one in Siberia, though I had hoped to be able to establish others at Tobolsk, Omsk, Krasnoiarsk, and especially Irkutsk. The depôt at Tomsk had been opened about three years, the annual sales having amounted to about 300 Bibles, 200 New Testaments, and 500 copies of the four Gospels in Sclavonic and Russian. They had also sold a few Hebrew Bibles and the Psalms, the latter chiefly in Sclavonic. The

about the horses, I took some pamphlets and Scriptures, and, having nailed up an illustration of the "Prodigal Son," I next distributed some tracts, saying, as I did so, "*darom*," which means "gratis"; and then, showing a New Testament, I said "*dvatzat-piat kopeck*," which means 25 kopecks; or I showed a copy of the Gospels, and said "*dve-natzat kopeck*," or 12 kopecks. Usually this offer was jumped at; sometimes three or four were bought by one person; and it not unfrequently happened that the first purchaser would run off to tell others of his good fortune, and bid them lose no time in following his example. This was usually done whilst the horses were being changed; but if we stopped for a meal, and it was noised abroad in the village that tracts were being given away, we were taken by storm, and sometimes could hardly eat in peace for the numbers who came to ask for our gifts.

We had barely reached the post-station, after seeing the priest, before he came driving close on our heels for his return visit. He wore the violet velvet hat of a protopope, was dressed in a black silk cassock, with a gold chain and crucifix about his neck, and with a loose white overcoat to protect him from the dust of the road. He cordially wished us success in our work, and asked us to call again on our homeward journey.

Protopope said he would gladly become a depositary for the Bible Society; and would purchase at once 50 copies from me of the New Testament, but Kansk had not been mentioned as one of the places at which a depôt was desired. Moreover, I had been instructed, in opening a depôt, to require the depositary to sign an agreement to abide by certain terms, after which I might take an order to the value of £30. But I did not gather that our friend wished altogether to turn merchant; and therefore I thought it better to let him have the 50 copies out of hand, rather than to put him into more complicated mercantile transactions with Petersburg.

We then went to the evening service in his church, after which the Ispravnik and his wife came to return our call, bringing with them their son, a boy of 13 years of age, who was to go to a military school at Irkutsk. The father said that he did not like to send him with just any one, but that he should be thankful to be allowed to place the boy under my care, offering at the same time to pay the cost of one horse to Irkutsk, which amounted to 25 roubles.

It is a common thing in Siberian travel, when one person does not wish to occupy the whole of his vehicle, to share the expense with a fellow-passenger. I therefore consented, and stowed the boy away among the tracts and books in the second tarantass, where he seemed happy enough. His joining us was rather a help, for his father gave us an open letter to all the post-masters of his district, requesting them, if there were not a sufficiency of post-horses, to hire some immediately from the peasants. He also added a *blanco* letter, which enabled us, in case of need, to take those reserved at the post-stations for the use of the Ispravnik or his police. This is called, I believe, "*Zemski*" post, applying only to Siberia, and the horses of which, when not wanted, are sometimes lent to private travellers.

The combined result of these letters was that we got on famously, and occasionally made 200 versts in the 24 hours. This for summer travelling is good—so good, in fact, that we hardly wished to do better, as it had now become very hot, and the dust of the way rendered the journey very fatiguing.

We were still passing through an undulating country, with delightful weather; on either side of the way grass, and in it grew a large yellow flower, similar in

form to our common white garden lily. On passing the frontier from the Yeneseisk to the Irkutsk governments, it soon became apparent that our new roads were not so good as those we had left behind. We crossed many rivers, on the banks of one of which we drove through an extraordinary swarm of white butterflies. The shrubs in the neighbourhood were evidently eaten bare by their *larvæ*, the *imagines*, or perfect insects, being assembled in troops on the ground. We were now drawing near a district famous for a small kind of mosquito, the bite of which is very virulent, and is so dreaded by the people that the men working at the roadside protect themselves about the head with horsehair veils. Another place in Siberia famous for these insects is the Barabinsky steppe, where horses persecuted by them sometimes break loose, and do so to certain death. We, however, were not incommoded by them.

On the 1st of July the weather was hotter than we had hitherto experienced it, and very oppressive, though at night it became chilly. The greatest heat registered in the province of Irkutsk in 1877 was during the month of August, when it rose to 90·3, the greatest cold registered being in January, and descending to 40·2 below zero.

On the second day after leaving Kansk we were somewhat hindered by a superabundance of fellow-travellers, with whom it was very pleasant to chat over a cup of tea in the post-house, though matters were not quite so smooth when it was discovered that less than the required number of horses were forthcoming, and the question arose as to who should be first served. At one station we had to stay five hours, yet it is

only fair to add that, thanks to our excellent recommendations, this was the longest delay of the kind that fell to our lot. Travellers are sometimes obliged to wait a whole day.

On the evening of the same day, at dusk, we reached Nijni Udinsk, and, as there was a small prison in the place, I was anxious to give a few books to the Ispravnik, and pass on without stopping; the latter, however, was away, so we went to his assistant. After knocking pretty lustily at his door, a servant appeared, who informed us that his master was asleep; and to awaken a man out of sleep is in Russia no venial sin. An Anglo-Russian friend informs me that she has frequently been told, on asking for a servant, that he was asleep, and could not be waked, because *a sleeping man's soul is before his God!* We told this servant, however, that we had a letter from Petersburg; and before we left the town a messenger came to the post-house, giving me the particulars I desired, and took back a sufficiency of books for the 98 prisoners under detention.

We then started off about midnight, and on the afternoon of the following day reached a station called Telma, which in previous years has been famous as possessing a factory in which cloth, paper, glass, and soap were made, besides which they produced rough linen woven from Yeneseisk hemp, and dark unbleached cloth, spun from the wool of the Buriat sheep. The peasants generally make a rough cloth of this last material. Manufactures do not flourish in Siberia, as the raw material is grown at enormous distances from the establishments, and, when manufactured, must often be taken enormous distances to be sold; so it is found

cheaper to buy the goods imported from other countries. A suit of tweed clothes costs, I heard, £6 at Krasnoiarsk, and on the Amur I met with a gentleman ordering his clothes from Petersburg, and having them sent by post to Blagovestchensk, a distance of 5,000 miles. The factory at Telma is still standing, and is not absolutely idle, but I gathered that it is not in a flourishing condition.*

We were now only about 50 versts from Irkutsk, which, under ordinary circumstances, we ought to have reached late the same night. Another project had, however, entered into my mind. About 70 versts north of Irkutsk is the largest prison in Eastern Siberia, called the Alexandreffsky Central Prison, the normal way of visiting which would have been for us to proceed to Irkutsk, present our letters, and so drive out and return, making a journey of 90 miles. Hearing at Telma that we could reach the place from thence in two hours by going across country, spend two hours inspecting the prison, and another two hours in returning to Telma, I calculated we should get back to the main road about midnight, and so reach Irkutsk on Saturday afternoon, and be ready for a quiet Sunday. The first difficulty in the way was that the law permitted no post-horses to be employed off the high-roads; but, thanks to the obliging post-master at Telma, this obstacle was overcome by his providing others, and I determined accordingly to try and save time by taking the prison on my way. How much

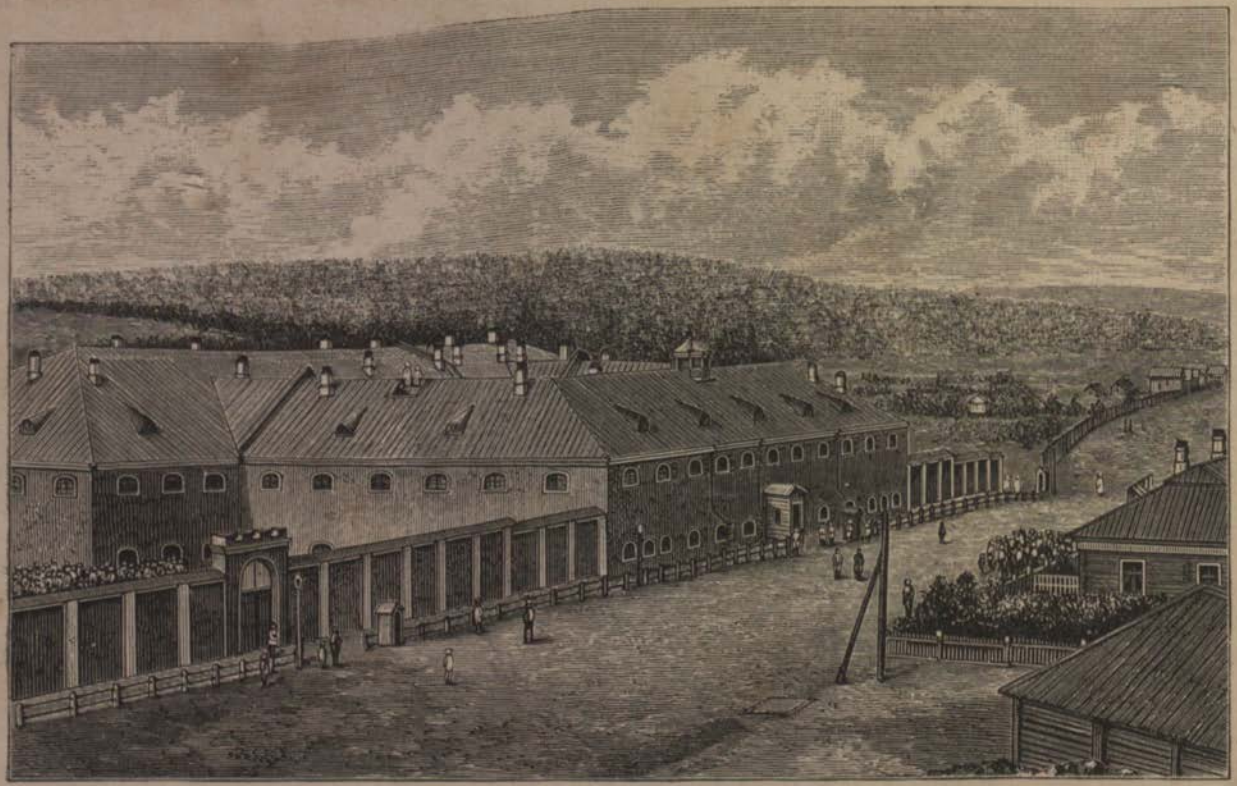
* Manufacturing industry, properly speaking, has no real importance in Siberia, except in distilling from grain and potatoes the alcohol which is sold in numberless taverns. Reckoning factories and distilleries together, there were, in 1876, according to Reclus, 1,100 factories and 4,000 workmen, which produced manufactures to the value of £800,000.

was involved in that decision I little thought at the moment, but it proved afterwards highly important.

The first object of interest we passed was a large salt-factory, which, like that at Telma, had in years gone by been worked by convicts under the management of the State. This kind of labour is no longer enforced there, and free workmen are employed instead. These were the only salt-works we heard of in Siberia, but we were told of some about 40 miles from Orenburg, in the Urals. Leaving the factory behind, we struck off through the woods, and were enjoying the drive thoroughly when it occurred to our *yemstchik* that he had taken the wrong direction. Accordingly, he went a long way back, but had to retrace his steps. This caused considerable delay, as did the crossing of the river Angara. At length, through a forest of pine, we reached the summit of a hill, and were able to take in at a glance the surroundings of the large prison, which we reached at dusk. On the road we met some Polish ladies, wives of officials, to whom I explained in French our object in coming. The Director, however, was gone to Irkutsk, and his deputy said it was too late that night, but that we might inspect the prison as early as we chose in the morning. I therefore named the hour of seven, and went to the post-house to sleep.

The keepers of the post-house in this out-of-the-way place appeared somewhat perturbed at the arrival of visitors who wished to spend the night under their roof. However, in this matter Siberian post-masters have no choice, for they are bound to find accommodation for travellers, and may not charge them for it; their profits are the small sums paid for the use of the

samovar, and for such refreshments as may be provided. Our quarters were better and more comfortable than usual, as also was our supper, and we lay down for a quiet night. Early in the morning the officer in charge of the prison came to say that when he had made us the promise on the previous evening he had intended to telegraph to Irkutsk for permission, but that there was a fire in Irkutsk, and telegraphic communication was stopped. He must therefore ask us to wait until the return of the chief, who was expected hourly. Accordingly, on his arrival we were conducted to the house of the Director; and though he had been travelling all night he received us at once, accorded us a hearty reception, and introduced us to his wife and friends. He was a Pole—by name Pavolo Schwekofsky—and his house was elegantly furnished, all his servants, however, being convicts. There was an appearance of comfort, not to say of luxury, about the place; and he had in a side room a turning-lathe and English tools. To this we called attention. "Ah, yes," said he, "we could not do without the English." And then, after drinking a glass of tea, we started to see the prison.



THE ALEXANDREFFSKY CENTRAL PRISON, NEAR IRKUTSK. *Page* 245.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ALEXANDREFFSKY CENTRAL PRISON.

Prison wards.—Punishment cells.—Communication with friends.—Nationalities of prisoners.—Their work.—Food.—Distribution of books.—Our reception.—Lunch.—Departure.—Runaway horses.—An accident.—Left alone.—Return to post-house.

WE found the prison a huge building, which had been originally erected for a brandy distillery. Hence it was, and sometimes still is, called the Alexandreffsky *zavod*, or factory. It contained 57 rooms, in each of which, according to size, were placed from 25 to 100 prisoners. We went into several of the ordinary wards, and found them lofty, but overcrowded. Also, in some of the oblong rooms, the inclined platforms for sleeping occupied so much space that only a narrow passage was left for walking about between them. When we entered such wards, therefore, the order was given that the men should mount the opposite edges of the platforms, and thus we passed to the end of the room and back. Further on we came to some small cells, over the doors of which was written the word "Secret"; and here I thought we might perhaps see something horrible. But the thing that struck me as worst about them was their smallness; for I should judge they could not have measured more than 8 ft. by 6 ft.,

though they were probably more than 12 ft. high. These were "punishment" cells; but were far more endurable than cells known by that name in some of our English gaols, where the prisoner is sometimes below the level of the ground, and in a state of total darkness, with all sound shut out save the rumbling of carriage-wheels in the street. In the Alexandreffsky cells there was abundance of light; there was a Russian *petchka*, or stove, just outside the door, and it was not difficult to imagine that some prisoners might prefer solitude under such circumstances to the society of the motley crew packed into the larger wards.

There is a room in the building in which prisoners are allowed to see their friends, who may come on every *maznik*, or fête day, Sundays included, to converse for five minutes, and then make way for others. If a prisoner has friends, they may bring him food any day between 11 and 12 o'clock. So, too, a prisoner may write to friends when he pleases, and receive from them money up to a rouble a week.

The total number of prisoners in (and I suppose about) this place was stated as 1,589; and as they were gathered from all parts of the Russian empire, the walking through the wards was nothing short of an ethnographical study.

Besides the ordinary Slavs of Russia in Europe, there were Finns, Poles, Tatars of Kasan, Tatars of the Crimea, and Tatars of the Caucasus and Steppes. There were Bashkirs from the province of Orenburg, where they are breeders of cattle; and the pastoral Kirghese, who roam over the steppes north of Persia. Tatars were known by their shaved heads and skull-caps, and Buriats by their unmistakable Mongolian

features. I counted half-a-dozen different nationalities in a single room.

One of the worst features in this huge prison I judged to be lack of work; for, as we went from room to room, we found convicts twirling their thumbs, and literally begging for employment. All of them, however, were under "hard-labour" sentences, some to the mines for twelve years, some to factory-work for eight and ten years, and others to *zavod* work for two and six years.

We were taken, at length, to see such of them as were occupied. We entered a good-sized room, in which there might have been 50 men making papers for cigarettes, of which they turned out 100,000 a week. Prisoners were glad to do this, as they earn a little money thereby. A man could manipulate 5,000 unfinished cases in a day; and three men working together very hard could earn 30 kopecks a day, but 20 kopecks was a fairer average. For a man, however, to earn 2½*d.* a day necessitated his sitting at work so closely as to make his chest ache. I am not clear whether the machinery and materials for making these cigarette-papers belonged to the prisoners, or to a merchant in Irkutsk who bought the papers. We visited a room or two filled with shoemakers, and gold-seekers' top-boots were shown us of their work. These were for sale at 14 shillings the pair. Outside the prison a small company of men were seen returning from making bricks, which are manufactured for the Government, and not for ordinary sale. Each man makes on an average about 100 a day. Fifty men, they told us, turn out 5,000, between 6 and 11 in the morning and 2 and 6.30 in the afternoon, for which

they get about 10*s*. There seemed, however, to be barely a tenth of the prisoners employed, at which we expressed astonishment. The authorities explained it by saying that they had no work to give them. This comparatively idle life of Siberian prisoners recalled what had been told me in Russia, that the Government now keep in European prisons many whom, but for the scarcity of suitable employment, they would send to Siberia; and I ought, perhaps, to add that a number of the convicts at Alexandreffsky were there, and had been there a long time, awaiting the decision of various committees who were considering how the Government could best dispose of them, so many of the Siberian mines having passed out of Imperial hands.

Whether our visit was too early in the day, or whether the prisoners were kept in their rooms for our inspection, I know not; but we saw none of them lounging in the yards, as in other places. The time allowed them for exercise is an hour a day. The number we saw wearing chains was comparatively small. If the convicts behave well, they are not usually kept in fetters, I heard, more than 18 months; and I certainly observed that, the further east I went, the fewer were the men in irons. We were next conducted to the kitchen, where was to be seen, in course of preparation for dinner, the uncooked meat, of which each man was said to have ½ lb. a day, including bone, and a daily allowance of 2¾ lbs. of bread. Near the prison is a garden, where some of the prisoners can work, and where they grow cucumbers, water-melons, and potatoes. A few acres of arable land, cultivated by convicts, were pointed out to us; and there was a hospital at a short distance, clean and airy, having

8 rooms, in which we found 73 patients, many of whom were suffering from *scorbutus*.

We now entered the office of the prison, and saw the books, in one of which were entered four categories of punishment, namely, that of mines, hard labour, factory employment, and no work, of which four the last seemed by far the most prevalent, and I think the worst; for not only had the poor fellows nothing to do, but they had nothing to read. To remedy this was, of course, the chief object of our visit; and the director readily entered into my plans concerning the books. The men had been asking for something to read, he said, only a day or two previously. We were glad, therefore, to leave with him 160 New Testaments and other portions of Scripture in half-a-dozen languages, and about 500 tracts and periodicals, so that there might be at least a New Testament placed in every room.

We were now anxious to depart, but this was not so easy; for by this time the officials had begun to realize that we had not come as spies or intruders, but that we had really a benevolent object in view, though they asked sundry questions before they could grasp our motives. What could be our object in coming such a long distance to visit Siberian prisons, and why should I take notes of what we saw? I said something about the luxury of doing good to the poor and unfortunate; and pointed out that, if I did not make notes of what was said, I should forget. "Besides which," I added, "perchance I may some day write about what I have seen." "Oh! then you are travelling for literary purposes, that you may bring out a book?" "No," said I; "but for all that I may perhaps write of my

travels"; after which there were given me several good-sized and well-executed photographs of the prison and its surroundings, with the remark, "Who knows? the English do such extraordinary things, we may, perhaps, see some day an engraving from these photographs in the English papers." But, whatever the motive which had brought us, they said it was very rare for them to receive such a visit, and they were highly gratified at our coming.

The director begged us to favour his wife by staying to dinner; and when for want of time I declined, all sorts of reasonable and unreasonable inducements were urged why I should do so. I remained firm, and we were then invited at least to partake of light refreshment at the house of the secretary of the prison. We there found ourselves in the midst of a family of Poles, with some good-looking daughters. The eldest was dressed in *Mala-Russiá*, or "Little Russian" costume, consisting of a morning dress of washing material, trimmed with embroidery of variegated colours, and with Russian lace. I admired this, and inquired where such embroidery could be purchased. The mother gave me a small piece as a specimen, and also presented me with a portrait of her daughter photographed in the same costume.

The photograph was taken by Malmberg of Irkutsk, and I mention it because it has won the unqualified admiration of two eminent London photographers, who pronounce that, both technically and artistically, no better could be seen in any part of the world. It is particularly choice, and, as an operator would say, "well built up." The light is good, and the background well arranged; and as a piece of artistic

workmanship it speaks well for the progress of art in Siberia that a photograph from Irkutsk should bear comparison with the best the world can produce.

After this quasi-lunch, and the exchange of sundry little souvenirs, we departed, hoping to regain the high road at Telma in about a couple of hours. We had reached the top of the hill, and begun the descent through the pine-forest; and the horses were going with a run, when one of the reins broke, and the right-wheeler began suddenly to run too wide from the centre horse. Before the yemstchik could stop his team, we came to a pine-tree at the side of the road, which the outer horse allowed to come between him and his fellow. We were going at a furious pace, and the wonder is that the whole concern, including ourselves, was not dashed to pieces. As it was, in rushing by I thought I saw the horse's head strike the tree, with a force that I expected must have killed it. We ran some distance before the remaining horses could be stopped, and then the yemstchik went back to find, as we feared, another horse dead in our service. To our surprise, however, the creature had run away. The force with which the tarantass was going had broken the remaining rein, had snapped the traces, and so allowed us to escape, by a few inches at most, a terrible accident.

We had first to search for the missing horse, now out of sight; for which purpose the yemstchik mounted one of our remaining steeds, and, subsequently, my interpreter the other, I being left alone. Presently a rough-looking man appeared coming along the road, with an extraordinary wallet slung at his side. He was curiously ornamented with a profusion of brass

buttons and decorations, some of which would have served for the dress of a Tunguse *shaman*. He turned out to be a horse-doctor, and not a robber, though he naïvely said that when he saw us at first he thought *we* were highwaymen, until the sight of the tarantass reassured him.

At length, after having been left about five hours, the yemstchik and my companion came back, but without the truant horse; so we determined to proceed with the two that remained. We accused our yemstchik of having been drinking, but he denied it. As he went on, however, he grew inconsolable at his loss of the horse, and fairly bellowed, saying that he feared he should be turned out of his place and be sent to prison. He came round gradually, too, to confess that, of the shilling I had given him for fodder, he had spent twopence in drink; and then to the interpreter, who sat on the box to drive, or see that we met with no accident, he expressed the hope that the *barin*, or gentleman, would "forgive him for being a *little* drunk."

And so it came to pass that by nightfall we got back to Telma, and found our friendly post-master about to send in search of us, as he was alarmed at our absence of 30 instead of 6 hours. After a good meal we left at midnight for Irkutsk, which under ordinary circumstances we ought to have reached early on the following morning. At one of the stations, however, there were no horses, and we had to wait four hours, which afterwards proved a mercy, though at the time I am afraid I chafed at the delay; so that we did not come in view of the city till 10 a.m.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CITY ON FIRE.

Approach to Irkutsk.—The city entered.—Remains of a fire.—A second fire.—Our flight.—Crossing of the Angara.—A refuge.—Inhabitants fleeing.—Salvage.—Firemen's efforts.—Spread of the catastrophe.—Return to lodging.—A chapel saved.—Spectacle of fire at night.—Reflections.

WHAT a vivid recollection I have of the lovely morning of that 7th of July! The sun was bright and warm, but the air was not yet hot. The road lay near the cold and swiftly-flowing Angara, and the plains over which we passed were stocked with cattle. Before us lay Irkutsk. This city, or perhaps Kiakhta, I had thought originally to make the eastward limit of our travels. Many friends had prophesied that we should never get there. Some said that I was undertaking more than I could carry out, and others that I should not be permitted by the Russians to go so far. A subtle feeling of satisfaction, therefore, stole over us as we posted along, and saw how soon these prophecies were to be falsified. The town, built on a tongue of land, formed by the confluence of two rivers, with its dozen churches, domes, and spires pointing to heaven, looked extremely pretty; and on the hills around, handsome villas, nestling among the trees, added not a little to the picturesqueness of the scene. The prospect before us, therefore, the

retrospect of what we had done, the pleasant morning, and the repose to which we were looking forward, all combined to raise our spirits, and cause us to hasten onward. Alas! we little knew how speedily the face of things would change.

At the ferry was collected a large number of common vehicles, before which, however, our post-horses took precedence. We speedily crossed, and drove through a triumphal arch, erected at the time of the annexation of the Amur, and situated at the entrance of the town. We did not proceed far before we saw where fire had destroyed two blocks of buildings, the embers of which were still smoking. But it was only similar to what we had seen at Perm and Tagil, so that we were not greatly surprised. Worse was to come. We drove to Decocq's hotel, and took apartments, paid and dismissed the yemstchiks, moved our belongings from the larger of the tarantasses, and arranged them in our rooms—or, rather, we were doing so, when the alarm was given that another fire had broken out. I clambered to the roof of the stables, and there, plainly enough, were flames mounting upwards, not a dozen houses off, and in the same street, though on the other side of the way.

The waiter said he thought the fire would not come towards the hotel, as the wind blew from the opposite direction; but I was disinclined to wait and see, and so we bundled our things back into the tarantass, and told the yemstchiks, who fortunately had not left the yard, to put to their horses, and in a few minutes we were out in the street, witnesses of a sight that is not easy to describe. Men were running from all directions, not with the idle curiosity of a London crowd

at a fire, but with the blanched faces and fear-stricken countenances of those who knew that the devastation might reach to them. They looked terribly in earnest; women screamed and children cried, and it was hard for me in the street to get an answer to any ordinary question.

Meanwhile the yemstchiks asked, Where should they go? I tried to discover where some of the persons to whom I had introductions lived, but people were too excited to tell me; and at last my companion suggested that we should go out of the town across the river. We soon put nearly a mile between us and the flames, and reached the bank of the Angara, where was a swinging ferry. The ferry was all but loaded, and would not take more than one of our two tarantasses. I therefore went with the first, leaving the interpreter to follow. On landing, the yemstchik drove along a bridge, at the end of which he motioned to me as to whether he should turn to the left or the right. To me it was just the same, but I pointed to the left; and that turning proved to be of not a little importance. I could say nothing to the yemstchik, and had therefore to wait till the ferry returned, and then crossed again, which occupied the greater part of an hour.

Meanwhile the increased smoke in the distance showed that the fire was spreading, and the inhabitants of the small suburb called Glasgova, to which I had come, were looking on in front of their houses. Among the people I noticed a well-dressed person, whom I addressed, asking if she spoke English or French. She at once inquired who I was and what I wanted. I replied that I was an English clergyman

travelling, that I had just arrived in Irkutsk, had run away from the fire, and was seeking a lodging. She answered that there were no lodgings to be had in any of the few houses on that side of the river; "but," said she, "pray come into my little house, where you are welcome to remain at least during the day." I was only too glad to do so; and, seeing that there was a small yard adjoining, I asked permission to put therein our two vehicles, in which we might sleep until some better place could be found. And thus we were a second time landed at Irkutsk, poorly enough, perhaps the reader may think, but in a far better condition, as will presently be seen, than before nightfall were many thousands of the inhabitants.

We soon found that our hostess was of good family, and an exile, though not a political, but a criminal one. On arriving at Irkutsk, the Governor-General had shown her kindness in allowing her to remain in the city, where she partly supported herself by giving lessons, and was living for the summer in this quasi country-house with a young man whom she called her brother, her little girl she had brought from Russia, and a small servant whom she spoke of as "ma petite femme de chambre." There was one tolerably spacious dwelling-room in the house, and in this were sundry tokens of refinement brought from a better home. On the wall hung a photograph of herself, as a bride leaning on the arm of her husband in officer's uniform, whilst several other photographs and ornaments spoke also of a better past.

The occasion, however, was not suited to long conversation, for the conflagration in the town was increasing. Whilst dining, we bethought ourselves

whether we could be of some service, and the outcome of our deliberations was that I offered to accompany Madame to her friends residing in the town, to see if we could be of use, whilst my interpreter stayed with the tarantasses and the little girl to guard the premises.

Madame and I, therefore, set out, accompanied by her maid. At the ferry we met a crowd of persons fleeing from the city, and carrying with them what was most valuable or most dear—an old woman tottering under a heavy load of valuable furs piled on her head; a poor half-blind nun, hugging an ikon, evidently the most precious of her possessions; a delicate young lady in tears, with her kitten in her arms; and boys tugging along that first requisite of a Russian home, the brazen *samovar*. Terror was written on all countenances. We pushed on to the principal street, and tried to hire a droshky, but it was in vain to call—they were engaged in removing valuables from burning houses, as were the best vehicles and carriages the town possessed. Even costly sleighs, laden with such things as could be saved from the flames, were dragged over the stones and grit in the streets.

Before long we came to the wide street in which were situated the best shops and warehouses, and where the fire was raging on either side and spreading. Those who were wise were bringing out their furniture, their account-books, and their treasures as fast as possible, and depositing them in the road and on vehicles, to be carried away. A curious medley these articles presented. Here were costly pier-glasses, glass chandeliers, and pictures such as one would hardly have expected to see in Siberia at all; whilst a little further on, perchance, were goods from a grocer's

or provision merchant's shop, and all sorts of delicacies —such as sweets and tins of preserved fruit, to which they who would helped themselves; and working-men were seen tearing open the tins to taste, for the first time in their lives, slices of West India pine-apples or luscious peaches and apricots. Other prominent articles of salvage were huge family bottles of rye-brandy, some of which people hugged in their arms, as if for their life, whilst other bottles were standing about, or being drunk by those who carried them. The effects of this last proceeding soon became apparent in the grotesque and foolish antics of men in the incipient stage of drunkenness.

It was curious to watch the conduct of some of the tradesmen, who seemed to hope against hope, and kept their shops locked, as if to shut out thieves, and in the hope that the fire would not reach their premises. I noticed one man, a grocer, whose doors were barred till the flames had come within two houses of his own; and then, throwing open the entrance, he called in the crowd to carry out his wares. They entered, and brought out loaves of sugar and similar goods, until one man carried out a glass-case full of *bon-bons*, at which there was a general onset in the street, every one filling his pockets amid roars of laughter. With this laughter, however, was mingled the crying of women, who wrung their hands as they emptied their houses, and saw the destroying flames only too surely approaching their homes.

In the street were all sorts of people—soldiers, officers, Cossacks, civilians, tradesmen, gentlemen, women and children, rich and poor, young and old —but not gathered in dense crowds; some were making

themselves useful to their neighbours, and a few were looking idly on. At every door was placed a jug of clean water for those to drink who were thirsty, and it would have been well if nothing stronger had been taken. The fire brigade arrangements seemed to me in great confusion. There were some English engines in the town,—one of them, of a brilliant red, bore the well-known name of "Merryweather and Sons,"—but the Siberians had not practised their engines in the time of prosperity, and the consequence was that the pipes had become dry and useless, and would not serve them in the day of adversity. The arrangements, too, for bringing water were of the clumsiest description. A river was flowing on either side of the city, but the firemen had no means of conducting the water by hose, but carried it in large barrels on wheels.

Now and then one saw a hand-machine in use, about the size of a garden engine, or a jet such as London tradesmen use to clean their pavements and their windows. Moreover, no one took command. I noticed in one case, as the flames approached the corner of a street, it evidently occurred to some that, if the house at the opposite corner could be pulled down, the fire might stop there for want of anything further to burn. They therefore got to the top of the house, and, with crowbars, unloosed the beams and threw them below; but, before they had gone on long, they changed their minds, and seemed oblivious of the fact that the fire would burn the beams equally well on the ground as when standing in a pile.

It must be confessed, however, that the fire had everything in its favour. Nearly all the houses were of wood—so completely so, that, after the calamity,

there was often nothing to mark the spot where a house had stood save the brickwork of the stove in the centre. There was a fresh breeze blowing too, and though the houses were in many cases detached, yet it frequently happened that the intervening spaces were stacked with piles of firewood, which helped to spread the conflagration.

A wooden house burning is of course a spectacle much grander than that of flames coming through the windows of a brick structure, and the heat much more intense. At Irkutsk it was sufficient to set fire to a building on the opposite side of the street, without the contact of sparks. In one case—that of a handsome shop—I noticed that the first things that caught were the outside sunblinds, which were so scorched that they at last ignited, and then set fire to the window-frames, and so to the whole building.

It soon became apparent that Madame could not reach her friends, who lived on the other side of the city, and therefore we made our way back towards the ferry, calling here and there and offering help. One friend asked us to take away her little daughter, which we did, and her husband's revolver, which I carried, and a bottle of brandy—put into the arms of the *femme-de-chambre*. Thus laden, we walked towards the river, whilst on all hands men and women were pressing into their service every available worker for the removal of their goods. A religious procession likewise was formed by priests and people with banners, headed by an ikon, in the hope that the fire would be stayed. Had such taken place, the ikon would no doubt have acquired the reputation of having the power, in common with many others, of working

miracles. As it was, there was a small chapel or oratory in the centre of the town that escaped the flames, though the houses on either side were burned. I heard this spoken of as something very wonderful, if not miraculous, and I am under the impression that it was so telegraphed to Petersburg; but, on looking at the place after the fire, the preservation of the little sanctuary seemed easily accounted for, by the fact not only that it was itself built of brick, and left no part exposed that could well take fire, but that the houses on either side happened also to be of brick, so that they did not, in burning, give off the same heat they would have done had they been of wood. One rejoiced, of course, that the building was saved; but I could not help suspecting that, half a century hence, the chapel will be pointed out as having been preserved by a miracle from the great fire of 1879.

It was evening before we reached our temporary lodging, and as the day closed the workers grew tired. Many were drunk, and others gave up in despair. The impression seemed to gain ground that nothing could be done, but that the devouring element must be left to burn itself out. Hope therefore fled, and the flames continued to spread till the darkness showed a line of fire and smoke that was estimated at not less than a mile and a half in length. It seemed as if nothing would escape. Now one large building caught, and then another, the churches not excepted. To add to the vividness of the scene, an alarm of church bells would suddenly clang out, to intimate that help was needed in the vicinity. Perhaps shortly afterwards the flames would be seen playing up the steeple, and fancifully peeping out of the apertures and windows;

then reaching the top, and presenting the strange spectacle of a tower on fire, with the flames visible only at the top, middle, and bottom. At last the whole would fall with a crash, and the sky be lit up with sparks and a lurid glare such as cannot be forgotten.

Meanwhile the inhabitants continued to flee by thousands—the swinging ferry near us crossed and recrossed incessantly, bringing each time its sorrowful load, either bearing away their valuables, or going back to fetch others. Many of the people brought such of their goods as they could save to the banks and islands of the two rivers, and there took up their abode for the night in a condition compared with which ours was comfortable.

Towards midnight the town presented a marvellous spectacle. I have already spoken of the enormous length of the line of fire when looked at laterally; but, as the darkness deepened, I walked down to a point on the bank from which could be seen the apex of the triangle, in the form of which the town was built, and where appeared a mass of flames estimated as covering an area of not less than half a square mile.

We were supposed to *sleep* that night in the tarantass, but I rose continually to watch the progress of the fire, which towards morning abated, but only because it had burnt all that came in its way. About eleven o'clock the last houses standing on the opposite bank caught fire, and thus, in about four-and-twenty hours, three-fourths of the town were consumed.*

As for myself, I had watched the fire with mingled

* The numbers of the buildings destroyed were, of stone more than 100, and of wood about 3,500, including 6 churches, 2 synagogues, and 2 Lutheran and Roman chapels, besides 5 bazaars, the custom-house,

THE BURNING OF IRKUTSK.

As seen from the Glasgova Suburb, 7th July, 1879.

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feelings, for we had narrowly escaped. And then came the recollection of the previous delays which had contributed to our preservation—the delay in going to the Alexandreffsky prison, the runaway horse in the wood, and our subsequent impatient waiting on the road. All these played an important part in saving us, for, had we arrived ten minutes earlier, our affairs might have gone very differently. Had we reached the town on the previous day, we should, in all probability, have been at church when the fire broke out; and then it is very doubtful whether we could have saved our effects, such was the difficulty of getting assistance. Moreover, the hotel was burnt within a very short time of our leaving it, so that, when looking back upon the chain of mercies by which we had been saved, I could not feel otherwise than deeply thankful.

and the meat market. The destruction of property was estimated at £3,000,000 sterling; and since the town contained about 33,800 inhabitants, upwards of 20,000 of them probably must have been rendered houseless and homeless. From calculations made three months afterwards, it appeared that 8,000 of the inhabitants were in good circumstances; 2,000 were in the military, and 1,000 in Government employ; 6,000 were in reduced circumstances, to whom bread and corn were sold at a very low price. There were 2,500 government *employés* similarly straitened by the catastrophe, leaving about 14,000 to earn their bread as best they could.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IRKUTSK.

Province of Irkutsk.—The capital.—Its markets.—Telegraph officers.—Visit to the Governor.—Ruins of the city.—Attempt to establish a Bible depôt.—Supposed incendiarism.—Benevolent arrangements of authorities.—Wife-beating.—Servility of Russian peasants.—Visit to a rich merchant.—Ecclesiastical affairs.—Visit to the acting Governor-General.—The prisons.—A prisoner's view of them.—Prison committee.—Distribution of books.—Visit to inspector of schools.—Change of route.

THE city of Irkutsk is the capital of a government of the same name,* and was founded in 1680. Its population in 1879 was 33,000. About 4,000 gold-miners spend their winter and their money in the city, often mentioned as a cheerful place of rest for travellers coming from China, or proceeding eastward. It is 1,360 feet above the sea, and has a climate which even in winter is well spoken of, though, in the late autumn, and previous to the freezing of the Angara, the fogs from the river bring rheumatism and diseases of the throat and lungs. Little wind blows, storms are less frequent than at Petersburg or Moscow, and the snows

* Compared with some of the enormous provinces of Siberia, that of Irkutsk is comparatively small, with an area of 300,000 square miles only; that is, about the size of Sweden and Norway. The surface is mountainous, and through it flow two rivers of importance, namely, the Angara, issuing from Lake Baikal, and the Lena, which rises not far from the capital. The province is divided into five uyezds, and has a population of 380,000, of whom only 10 per cent. are dwellers in towns. Marriages 4,600, and 25,000 births are recorded in the province yearly.

are not superabundant. Whether in winter or summer, the panorama of Irkutsk and its surroundings is one of beauty. Of its 20 churches, several were planned and constructed by two Swedish engineer officers captured at Pultava, and sent into exile by the great Peter.

The markets of Irkutsk are well supplied. Fish and game are plentiful. Beef is abundant and good, and costs about *2d.* a pound. Pork, veal, and mutton are also cheap, especially in winter, when everything that can be frozen succumbs to the frost. Frozen chickens, partridges, and other game are often thrown together in heaps like bricks or fire-wood. Butchers' meat defies the knife, and some of the salesmen place their animals in fantastic positions before freezing them. Frozen fish are piled in stacks, and milk is offered for sale in cakes or bricks. A stick or string is generally congealed into a corner of the mass to facilitate carrying, so that a wayfarer can swing a quart of milk at his side, or wrap it in his handkerchief at discretion. Whilst the products of the country are thus cheap, it should be observed that everything brought from beyond the Urals is expensive on account of the long land carriage. Champagne, for example, costs 12*s.* or 14*s.* a bottle, and porter and ale 7*s.* 6*d.*; the lowest price of sugar is 8*d.* a pound, while sometimes it costs 1*s.*; and as much as 2*s.* 6*d.* may occasionally be given for a lemon.

Much of this, however, I had to learn by report or reading; for, at the time of our visit, the Sunday's fire had upset everything, and it became a serious question on Monday morning as to what we should do. Many of the telegraph clerks in Siberia are Danes, and speak several languages. We found that we had one of them, Mr. Larsen, for a near neighbour; for the tele-

graph office had been burnt, and he had come to our side of the river to take shelter in the next house, where, having no electric battery, he had tapped the Verchne Udinsk wire, and was trying in this way, though without success, to communicate intelligence. He had had nothing to eat for 24 hours, and possessed only the clothes in which he stood; so it was quite a charity to take him a glass of tea to his temporary office in the open air, after which he dined with us. Mr. Larsen, to whom we had an introduction, had been a telegraphist in London, and spoke English fluently, so that we were able to discuss our prospects to advantage. It was of prime importance for us that we should see the Governor of the province and the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia as quickly as possible, for it was not hard to perceive that what provisions had escaped the fire would be sold at famine prices; lawlessness, it was rumoured, might get the upper hand; and it seemed better that we should leave the place without much delay. Our adviser feared, however, and reasonably so, that we should be able to get no attention from the higher officials in the present state of excitement, seeing the embers of the city were still smoking, and the authorities would naturally have more important business than ours to attend to. Mr. Larsen, however, kindly offered to accompany me over the river to see if anything could be done. Accordingly we crossed, and, walking along the broad road by the side of the Angara, the ashes of the fire scorched our faces.

We now saw something of the condition of the people who had fled to the bank of the river on the previous day, with such effects as they could save. Here were gentlefolks "camped out" under chests of drawers,

tables, and boxes, arranged in the best manner possible in the open air—sheets being used for walls, and curtains for coverings. Ikons from churches were lying about; likewise tables, heaped with philosophical instruments from the high school; and carts filled with movables. The instruments from the telegraph station were standing by a post, to which paper streamers were fastened to intimate that this was the temporary telegraph office. The people's demeanour, however, was in strange contrast with their pitiable condition; for many, having saved their samovars, were drinking afternoon tea, and on all sides were joking and laughing at their comical situation.

We found many of his friends among those beside the river, and each began good-humouredly to ask what the other lost in the fire, and what had been saved. Nobody seemed inclined to be at all dull over the matter, and the same thing was apparent with the Deputy-Governor Ismailoff, upon whom we called. "What have you lost?" said the General to my companion. He lightly threw open his coat, and intimated that *that* was all he had saved. At this the General laughed heartily, and said that he was not so well off, for that the very shirt on his back was a borrowed one! Yet the Governor had lost in the fire a brand-new house, upon which he had spent many thousands of roubles.

Contrary to our expectation, it was arranged for us to see the acting Governor-General next morning, and meanwhile we had time to look at the ruins of the city. People had taken refuge with their effects in the large squares, as well as on the banks and islands of the river. Many had fled into the neighbouring villages.

The suburbs had escaped the fire, as well as many of the houses standing in spacious grounds. A few of the churches also were untouched. The large hospital was safe, likewise the usine for smelting gold, and the Governor-General's house, but many of the public buildings had perished; amongst these the museum, in which I expected to find a good ethnographical collection. I should judge about three-fourths of the city were destroyed, and that the best part of the town; and so complete was the wreck that the *isvostchiks* with their droshkies hardly knew their way about the blackened streets.

We met a few of the higher class of exiles living free in Irkutsk, and, on asking them what they would do, received for reply, "We do not know. We have been earning something by teaching, but now our patrons will leave us. All sorts of provisions will be frightfully dear, and yet we dare not leave. So what is to be done?" The same doubts as to the future pressed heavily upon those tradesmen whose shops were not burnt.*

Of course there were various rumours afloat during the excitement of the previous day—one, that the devastation was caused by a wilful act. Similar rumours were afloat at Perm and Tagil, and at Irkutsk more than twenty arrests were reported. But, upon asking

* I was specially anxious to open a depôt for the Bible Society in Irkutsk, and to that end called upon a bookseller and printer named Sinitzun, of Harlampi Street, and invited him to become a depositary. He replied that he had the will to do so, but that he must first consult his partners; for it was doubted whether the city would be rebuilt, and whether persons having lost their premises would not, instead of re-erecting them, go and live elsewhere. I have heard, since my return, however, that the town is rising from its ashes even on a grander scale than it formerly possessed.

the Governor, it proved to be nonsense; for only two men had been arrested, and it was very doubtful whether even they were guilty. The only origin I heard given was that a hay-loft ignited, from which the flames spread.*

In Siberian towns the police are represented by the *gendarmerie;* and in other places are police-masters with their employés. There are, strictly speaking, no policemen, but Cossacks are usually employed in their stead; and at the end of their short service are allowed to go home. They are, however, anything but efficient constables, and I was told that at Irkutsk the authorities do not employ them. To protect whatever might be of value among the ruins, and to keep order after the fire, troops were marched into the city by day, and patrolled the place at night.

Great credit was due to the officials for the prompt manner in which they attempted the relief of distress. The fire was scarcely extinguished before a committee was formed, and some of the merchants laid down handsome sums. Proclamations were posted about the place, saying that officers could be furnished with dinners at the rate of 30 kopecks a plate, that bread

* The Russians have reason, however, for constant suspicion, for they have a revengeful way of "letting loose the red cock" upon a man, which means setting his house on fire; and this is only too common among the peasants of Siberia, as, in fact, generally in all Russia. Thus, of 758 fires which took place in Siberia in 1876, no less than 99, or more than one-eighth, were due to incendiaries, to say nothing of nearly 500 more of which the causes could not be traced. Further particulars relating to these 758 fires are, that 185 were registered as due to "carelessness," and 10 to lightning, whilst the estimated loss of the whole 758 was reckoned at £82,162. With such a number of fires it is not difficult to understand the dread of destruction in which Siberians live, nor their practice of having a large chest in the house, in which they habitually keep their valuables, to be removed, if necessary, at a moment's notice.

might be bought for 2 kopecks—that is, a halfpenny—a pound; and that for the first week the poor might have bread for nothing; further, that all persons burnt out might, on application, receive the sum of 30 kopecks. No serious outbreak of disorder occurred during our stay, though a good deal of drunkenness was visible. With two inebriates we were brought palpably into contact. In the yard we occupied was a small kitchen-house, where lived a woman cook, her husband, and some children. The husband had been to the fire, had been drinking, and came home accompanied by a drunken associate. The companion, referring to the cook, said, "As for that woman, she ought to be hanged"; whereupon her husband fell to beating mercilessly both her and her boy of about ten years old; and the child came to us crying, as if he were half killed. Whereupon we rushed to the rescue, and one of the party, seizing the drunken man, took him from his wife, and gave him a thrashing.*

When I got further east, I heard of a third and similar instance of wife-beating, related to me by a merchant in whose house I stayed. His servants were convicts, simply because he could get no others; but he said he was not usually curious to ask for what crimes they had been sent to Siberia. It happened,

* This assault by the husband was, as far as I know, quite unprovoked on the part of his better half, and it serves as an illustration of the way in which a certain class of the Russians treat their wives. It also serves to confirm what is written of Akoulka's husband in Dostoyeffsky's "Buried Alive," where two prisoners are talking in the night, and one relates: "I had got, somehow or other, in the way of beating her. Some days I would keep at it from morning till night. I did not know what to do with myself when I was not beating her. She used to sit crying, and I could not help feeling sorry for her, and so I beat her." Subsequently he murdered her. After which relation, the other prisoner acquiesces, and says that "wives *must* be beaten to be of any service."

however, that he had a woman-cook who was particularly well-behaved, and an excellent servant; and he asked her one day why she had been exiled. She said it was for poisoning her husband; upon which my friend opened his eyes, and said,—

"Oh, then, perhaps you will murder me?"

"Oh, no, master; I should not murder *you*."

"Yes, but if you would murder your husband, why not, some day, *me?*"

"Oh, no, master; you would not do as he did, for he beat me every day for two years."

Thus it was not altogether a meaningless form at a Russian wedding, that anciently the bridegroom took to church a whip, and in one part of the ceremony lightly applied it to the bride's back, in token that she was to be in subjection.

It should be remembered, however, that the brutal conduct just described belongs to a type well known in a certain part of England; the difference between the two being that the Russian bully beats his wife with a whip, while the English one kicks her to death. The Russian wives take very kindly to a moderate amount of such treatment, and those of the lower class do not murmur or complain, but consider the "master" has a right to chastise them; and when things do not go so far as this, they expect, when they do not please their husbands, to be slapped and corrected accordingly. In fact, the Russian wife among the lower classes does not take what we think her proper position in a house. The husband usually goes to market once a week, and buys all he wants, business of such importance not being entrusted to the wife, who therefore knows nothing even of the cost of her household articles.

Among the higher classes, also, the master usually sends his chief servant to market, and pays for all that is consumed in the house.

There came out of this quarrel between man and wife another characteristic of the Russian peasantry, which perhaps is a remnant of serfdom, and betrays their want of manliness in the presence of their superiors. My merchant friend, just referred to, had a convict in the house whilst I was there, whom once before he had dismissed for drunkenness. The man came back entreating that he might be reinstated, but his master said, "No, I have warned you continually, and done everything I could to keep you sober, but in vain." "Yes, sir," said the man; "but then, sir, you should have given me a good thrashing." So with the fighting husband at Irkutsk: after receiving his stripes he went away, but soon after came back, thanking the gentleman for his thrashing, and promising to behave better in future. In the days of serfdom, it was no uncommon thing for a gentleman to box the ears of his droshky driver; but this cannot now be done with impunity. My mercantile friend told me he was one day driving in Petersburg with a Russian gentleman, when the latter struck the isvostchik for doing something that displeased him; whereupon the man turned round and said, "No more of that, sir; those days are gone by, and if you strike me again I shall return it,"—a threat quite unbearable to a *blagorodni*, or "noble"; and he was about to go on as of old, when my friend said, "Look! you had better not; for if you are summoned, and I am called as a witness, I shall be bound to say that you began it"; whereupon he desisted.

We took an early opportunity after the fire to deliver up to General Khamenoff, its owner, the second tarantass we had borrowed at Tomsk, and in which my companion and I had driven and slept for a thousand miles. Our benefactor was in reality a rich merchant, and had given, if I mistake not, very handsome sums of money for educational purposes in Irkutsk. This patriotic action had gained him the distinction of "General." His buildings had been saved, and we thus had an opportunity of seeing the house of one well-to-do merchant at Irkutsk.

The General was getting old, and appeared in a long dressing-gown, coming out of his beautiful garden, and seating us in a little secretarial chamber, which had about it sundry marks of foreign influence and taste. Before joining us, however, he bade adieu to a previous visitor, and called his footman to open the door. There was something inexpressibly droll about his manner of doing so, for he simply gave a prolonged grunt—ugh!!—and as the footman did not come at grunt number one, it was repeated, and the servant in passing received from his master a cuff at the back of the head, doing so with a grin and a duck of the noddle, as a schoolboy receives a blow from his mother's palm, knowing that he shall not be hurt. The old gentleman then heard from us how we had escaped from the hotel, and how we were making a sleeping chamber of his tarantass, which he said we might continue to do until we left the town.

I was anxious to learn something of the state of ecclesiastical affairs in the province, and to inquire what the Russian Church was doing in her missions to the Buriats. The chief ecclesiastic of the province is one

Benjamin, Archbishop of Irkutsk and Nertchinsk, under whom is a suffragan bishop, Meleti of Selenginsk. The Diocese has 347 churches and chapels, 5 monasteries, and one nunnery. One of the monasteries is near Lake Baikal, and here lives, if I mistake not, the Bishop of Selenginsk, who could have given information about the Buriats, but the monastery lay too far out of our way to allow of our visiting it. Nor were we successful with the Archbishop; for on going to the monastery, his official residence, which had narrowly escaped the fire, we found him gone to his country residence in the suburbs. "When will he return?" we asked. "God knows," said our priest informant; thereby using an expression which I observed to be very common among all classes of Russians.*

On the Tuesday morning after the fire we were to be presented, as I have said, to the acting Governor-General of Eastern Siberia. The supreme Governor-General was Baron Friedrichs, to whom I had two private letters of introduction, besides my official documents; also we had made the acquaintance of his son when travelling on the Obi. The Baron, who was in ill-health, was at some mineral springs on the Mongolian frontier, and his place was filled at the time of our visit by M. Lochwitzky, the Governor of Yeneseisk, to whom we were presented by General Ismailoff. We met at the Governor-General's house, the finest in the city, having been originally built and furnished, regard-

* The chief ecclesiastical shrine of Irkutsk is a large church a little way out of the city. In it are the remains, gorgeously entombed, of St. Innokente, said to be preserved as fresh as when he died. This man is regarded as the apostle of Siberia. He was originally a missionary, who, in 1721, was sent to China; but the Chinese Government refusing him admission to their country, he settled six years afterwards at Irkutsk.

less of expense, by an enormously rich tea merchant. We found M. Lochwitzky the first of the Siberian Governors (except the Governor-General in the West) who could converse in French. He entered readily into my plans for the distribution of books, thanked me for those I had left at Krasnoiarsk for his province, and promised to do for me what was a great boon, namely, to send some books to the town of Yakutsk, to be distributed throughout that largest province of the country. We were introduced to a Colonel Solovief, whose brother was in London, as Secretary to the Grand Duchess of Edinburgh; and after an assurance from the Governor-General that he would do all he could to further our wishes, we started to see the prisons, under the conduct of the Procureur of the town.

We drove through the ruins of the fire, and then crossed, by a wooden bridge 300 yards long, the Uska-Kofka, by which one side of Irkutsk is bounded. This stream divides the town from the prison and the workshops, where a certain number of convicts are employed.* Speaking generally, the prison seemed to me to resemble others I had seen in Siberia, and to call for no special remark. Perhaps, however, I ought to add that before I left the town I had the opportunity of hearing about the establishment from a prisoner's point of view. Thus I heard that, at six o'clock on the morning of our visit, the prisoners were told to

* There were 270 men in the prison, one room holding 21 murderers, another 28 thieves, a third 20 forgers, a fourth 28 who had been exchanging their names and punishments, and a fifth 39 who were "without passports," and so on. In one room they were making match-boxes, for which they received for themselves a tenth of their earnings. Other prisoners were making furniture, of which the materials were supplied by the prison officers, and for which, of course, they recouped themselves.

have all in order because some Englishmen were expected, and that certain objectionable things were hidden away. I thought, however, that it did not speak much for my informant's candour when, on pressing him to say what the objectionable things were, he did not tell me. Again, my informant tried to make it appear that the officers stole the prisoners' food by giving them short quantity, though he said the *quality* of the food was good enough. The Procureur said the prisoners did not eat all the food allowed them; and from the quantity of pieces of bread which we so often saw lying about in Russian prisons, I should be disposed to think this true. This seems to be so common, that we were told at Tiumen the prisoners may *sell* what they do not eat; but at Irkutsk my informant said that they did not receive more than half their allowance, and that a quarter of a pound only of meat was given for 10 men—a quantity so ridiculously small, that one could not but think that here exaggeration must have overshot the mark. Moreover, my informant told me that what he said was not from personal experience, because he was not one of the peasant prisoners whose circumstances he professed to relate.*

* The citizen prisoners, he said, were allowed in money 17½ kopecks a day, which they could spend as they pleased, and with which they could buy a pound of meat (10 kopecks), and 2½ lbs. of bread (7½ kopecks). They have, however, in Irkutsk, a liberal prison committee, who help in the matter of food—the cabbage in the soup, for instance, being provided by them; and my informant, though grumbling about almost everything else, allowed that the dinners given to the sick, which cost 20 kopecks, and all the arrangements about the prison hospital, were exceedingly good. There were even books provided for the patients, but this was through the kindness of the doctor. My non-official informant also alleged that the prison officials took from the pay of the workmen, giving them far less than the value of their labour, and so unrighteously enriched themselves.

I was told in the town that to take books to the Irkutsk prison was a work of supererogation; and I confess to a feeling of disappointment when, on asking to see the library, I was taken to a cupboard full of New Testaments and tracts, precisely the same as some of those I was distributing, but all kept so fresh and in such order that evidently no one had used them. The committee was reported to have spent as much as £30 on books for the prison, but the officials had evidently not made the books accessible to those for whom they were intended. Their excuse was that the prisoners did not ask for them; but no doubt the officials were afraid of their being torn, and that trouble would ensue, and so had kept them locked up. It reminded me of what my Finnish friend had written, that when she went to the prison, the officials said, "The books must be arranged in order, in case the inspector should come"; and thus the books were practically kept from the inmates. When the Governor asked me what I thought of the prison, I did not fail to point out the inconsistency of withholding the books;

His tone, however, was so exceedingly bitter, that had he not allowed that there was *one* good thing in connection with the prison, I should have discredited all he said, especially as he dealt so much in generals, and avoided particulars. As it was, I thought perhaps he might have spoken the truth in some respects. I heard subsequently, from another exile, that the Director of the prison received only £40 a year for salary, whilst from another I heard £120 or £150; and if either of these figures are true, it is not difficult to see that a dishonest official may be strongly tempted to take advantage (as the Russians say) "of his opportunities." These "opportunities," however, are not confined to matters of food. I heard of a prison director at Nijni Udinsk who had orders to send 30 prisoners to Nikolaefsk, which for certain reasons is a favourite place with the convicts; whereupon this director made his choice to fall upon those whose wives could pay him 25 roubles, or 50 shillings. This looks a large amount for a prisoner to pay, but my informant had in possession 50 roubles to be transferred for this purpose.

but of this he was ignorant, and he promised to look into the matter. I endeavoured also to make clear, in speech and by writing, that wherever my books or tracts went throughout the province, they were to be placed within reach at all times of the prisoners, and not to be put away in any of the libraries.

Thus we inspected the two prisons, and also saw a school built by the committee for prisoners' children; in it were 42 scholars. We visited likewise a gentleman named Sokoloff, who was the deputy-inspector of schools for Eastern Siberia. There is also an inspector of schools for Western Siberia, who lives at Omsk. I was surprised to hear of the many schools and scholars in the sparsely-populated and, for scholastic purposes, exceedingly difficult country of Eastern Siberia.* Our object in calling upon the inspector was to ask him to distribute throughout the schools copies of my tracts and periodicals, and to that end I began by showing my credentials. But upon hearing my object, he said that was quite sufficient; and he needed to see no papers, but would willingly help. He bought, moreover, on his own account, 200 New Testaments for 40 roubles, to give as prizes to the young schoolmasters on leaving the institution, by which means the books would be scattered widely.†

* Mr. Sokoloff had under his inspection, in 1878, 13 classical schools, 1 commercial, 1 industrial, 11 inferior, and 211 elementary schools, attended by 6,000 boys and 1,500 girls. These figures, moreover, were exclusive of the Amur district, and parts about the Sea of Okhotsk There were also under his inspection two training institutions, one of them being the house at which we called—a new building for the training, at one time, of 80 village schoolmasters. Its furniture and fittings were admirable. It had an excellent museum, and a room for tutorial practice; and I was particularly struck with the number of models and apparatus for the teaching of natural science.

† Besides these sent to the inspector, we confided to M. Lochwitzky

We now considered our next step. My original idea, when leaving England, as already intimated, was to proceed to Irkutsk; and then, after running on to Kiakhta for the gratification of seeing a Chinese town, to return to Europe, and come home by the Caucasus and the Mediterranean. I had been warned before quitting London that I should see nothing of the severities of Siberian exile-life if I did not penetrate the region beyond Lake Baikal; and, travelling on the Obi, this statement was confirmed by a Russian officer in the prison service. I feared, however, I could not do this in a single summer, and that, if I went so far east, I should be unable to return before winter set in. It never occurred to me that there was any available way of reaching the Pacific from Irkutsk other than by crossing the Mongolian desert to China, and this I was not disposed to do.

But when I learned that there was a service of steamers on the Amur, this opened the way for other possibilities; and on June 21st, as we rolled away from Tomsk, there dawned upon my mind a thought, the conception of which seemed at once to promise the birth of great things. What, said I to myself, if I could go right across Asia and leave so many copies of Scripture as would suffice for putting at least a New

for the government of Yakutsk, and for Eastern Siberia generally, about 170 New Testaments and portions of Scripture, and upwards of 3,000 tracts and periodicals; and with General Ismailoff, for the province of Irkutsk, about the same number of Scriptures, but rather less of other papers. We also left with General Ismailoff 500 Finnish tracts and books for the German pastor, Ratcke; these last I have since heard from the pastor were specially acceptable, inasmuch as when he returned to Irkutsk he found all his books burnt. I have heard, too, since my return, from M. Lochwitzky, that those in his hands have been distributed according to my directions.

Testament or a copy of the Gospels in every room of every prison, and in every ward of every hospital, throughout the whole of Siberia! As I look back upon it now as an accomplished fact, the matter seems ordinary enough; but when the thought came into my mind it looked like a consummation far beyond anything I had hoped to accomplish, and a result which, if it might be compassed, would be a cause of thankfulness for the rest of my life.

Accordingly I quietly nursed the idea till we reached Irkutsk, thus far having given a sufficiency of books answerable to the plan for all the provinces behind me; and there yet remained three before me. Several boxes of books were unopened, but these could not be sent forward, because, in the first place, there was no carrier, or, if there were, the fire had confounded all order; and even if some one could be persuaded to take the books, it was very doubtful if they would reach the hands of the prisoners unless I went with them in person and showed my credentials.

I determined, therefore, to journey onward and do my best to carry out the scheme which had taken possession of my mind. But to do this it was necessary to have supplementary documents, for I had asked the Minister of the Interior for letters only as far as Kiakhta. M. Lochwitzky, however, most kindly helped in the matter, and gave me the letters I needed for my extended plans. We were then free to go forward again (which the reader may do at once, if he prefers, by missing the next two chapters); but something must first be said of the routes by which former travellers have proceeded eastwards

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LENA.

History of Russian invasion.—Former travellers to Okhotsk.—Cochrane, Erman, and Hill.—Down the Lena to Yakutsk.—Prevalence of goitre.—The Upper Lena and its tributaries.—The Lower Lena.—Discoveries of mammoths.—New Siberian islands.—Nordenskjold's passage.

WHEN, at the beginning of the 17th century, the Cossack conquerors of Siberia had crossed the Yenesei, and had pushed on as far as Lake Baikal, they were met by the numerous and warlike tribe of the Buriats, who opposed the invaders with considerable force. Not waiting, therefore, for their entire subjection (which took 30 years to accomplish), the Cossacks turned northwards to the basin of the Lena, and descended the river more than half-way to the Arctic Sea, where, coming in 1632 to the principal town of the Yakutes, they built a fort and founded the city of Yakutsk. After this they crossed the Aldan mountains, and, seven years later, reached the Sea of Okhotsk. For two centuries this was the route followed by those who would cross Siberia from the Urals to the Pacific, or *vice versâ*. In the present day there are two other roads. All must go by the route we travelled from Tomsk to Irkutsk, but from thence the Pacific can be reached either by crossing the Mongolian desert to Peking, or by traversing the Buriat steppe, and so

descending the Amur. The second of these routes is now the best, but not briefly to mention the old route would be to omit much interesting information concerning the Lena, with its native population and fossilized remains, as well as to miss the opportunity of hearing a little of some of the most daring and adventurous journeys of previous travellers.*

The most remarkable of these was an Englishman named John Dundas Cochrane, a captain in the Royal Navy, who, in 1820, proposed to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that they should give their sanction and countenance to his undertaking alone a journey into the interior of Africa, with a view to ascertaining the course and determination of the river Niger. This they declined, whereupon he procured two years' leave of absence, and resolved to attempt "a walking tour" round the globe, as nearly as could be done by land, crossing from Northern Asia to America at Behring's Straits, his leading object being to trace the shores of the Polar Sea along America by land, as Captain Parry

* I allude to the accounts of Strahlenberg, De Lesseps, Billings, Ledyard, Dobell, Gordon, Cochrane, Erman, Cotterill, and Hill.

Strahlenberg was a Swedish officer, who, at the beginning of the 18th century, was banished for 13 years to Siberia. He collected a vast amount of information concerning the country generally, and compiled polyglot tables of aboriginal languages, and amongst them that of the Yakutes inhabiting the valley of the Lena, of whose Pagan condition he gives many illustrations.

M. de Lesseps was French Consul and interpreter to Count de la Perouse, the well-known circumnavigator. De Lesseps entered the country at Kamchatka in 1788, and wrote an account of his travels across Siberia and Europe to Paris.

Captain Billings was an Englishman, who, after sailing with the celebrated Captain Cook, was employed by the Empress Katharine II. to make discoveries on the north-east coast of Siberia, and among the islands in the Eastern Ocean stretching to the American coast. For this purpose

was at the time attempting it by sea. Accordingly he left London with his knapsack, crossed the Channel to Dieppe, and then set out. This gentleman was endowed with an unbounded reliance upon his own individual exertions, and his knowledge of man when unfettered by the frailties and misconduct of others. One man, he said, might go anywhere he chose, fearlessly and alone, and as safely trust himself in the hands of savages as among his own friends. His favourite dictum was that an individual might travel throughout the Russian empire, except in the *civilized* parts between the capitals, so long as his conduct was becoming, without necessaries failing him. He put his principle rather severely to the test, and it must be allowed that he did so with very general success, for he states that in travelling from Moscow to Irkutsk (4,000 miles by his route) he spent less than a guinea. From Irkutsk he descended the Lena to Yakutsk, from whence, accompanied by a single Cossack, he penetrated in a north-easterly direction almost to the shores of the Ice Sea at Nijni Kolimsk, where, having altered his plans, he turned back by a most difficult route to Okhotsk.

he proceeded to North-Eastern Siberia in 1785, sailed down the river Kolima, explored a portion of the country eastward, and then returned by way of Yakutsk.

Another of Captain Cook's officers, John Ledyard, had the most romantic enthusiasm for adventure, perhaps, of any man of his time. He conceived the project of travelling across Europe, Asia, and America as far as possible on foot, and to this end he set out from London with about £50 only in his pocket. He reached Yakutsk, where he met with Captain Billings, and with him was hoping to proceed to America, when, by order of the Russian Court, Ledyard was arrested on suspicion of being a French spy, and was taken off to Moscow.

Another journey across Northern Asia was made after the time of Billings by Peter Dobell, a counsellor of the Court of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Russia. Dobell landed in Kamchatka in 1812, and from thence proceeded overland to Europe.

From this place he sailed to Kamchatka, and married a native, whom he brought by sea back to Okhotsk, and then in winter crossed the Aldan mountains to Yakutsk, whence the happy pair proceeded to Irkutsk, and at length reached England, where Mrs. Cochrane, as I learn from the daughter of one who knew her, was carefully educated, and passed as a lady in good society. For enterprise and bravery this captain, I take it, easily bears off the palm from all Siberian travellers.*

The writer who has added most, perhaps, to our scientific knowledge of the valley of the Lena is M. Adolph Erman, who crossed Siberia in 1828, in conjunction, though not in company, with Professor Hansteen, the first professor at the Magnetic Observatory at Christiania, in Norway, and famous for his researches in terrestrial magnetism. They both travelled for the purpose of making magnetic and other observations; but, on arriving at Irkutsk, Professor Hansteen returned to Europe, whilst Erman continued down the Lena to Yakutsk, crossed to the Sea of Okhotsk, and so continued round the world.†

Later on, one more Englishman has reached the Pacific by way of the Lena, namely, Mr. S. S. Hill, who did so in 1848, and it is not unlikely that he may, for some time, be the last of the intrepid travellers who have accomplished this feat, since the Amur is

* Another journey from Okhotsk up the Lena to Irkutsk and Kiakhta, and then across Siberia to Europe, was made about 1820 by a merchant named Peter Gordon; but his notes are very short, and appear only in his "Fragment of a Tour through Persia."

† Professor Erman received the Patron's gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society of London in 1844, for his scientific researches in physical geography, meteorology, and magnetism around the globe in 1828-30. His researches in Northern Asia were of especial value, particularly in Eastern Siberia and Kamchatka.

now open to the Russians, and presents a far easier way of crossing the continent.

To follow the older route, the first portion had to be traversed by post vehicles from Irkutsk, a distance of 160 miles in a north-easterly direction. The road crosses the water-parting of the Lena basin at or near the station Khogotskaya, which is about 90 geographical miles from Irkutsk. The traveller journeys through a hilly country, where there is abundant pasture, and where the land is to some extent cultivated, to the village of Kachugskoe, situated on the banks of the Lena. Here various sorts of merchandise are embarked in large flat-bottomed boats, which are floated down the river. These goods are exchanged with the natives for furs, the boats at the end of the journey being broken up in districts where timber is scarce, and the furs brought back in smaller craft.*

The descent of the Upper Lena to Yakutsk by water was undertaken by Mr. Hill in spring, and by Captain Cochrane in autumn, but Mr. Erman accomplished it on the ice in winter, by a 20 days' sledge journey of nearly 1,900 miles. As he passed along he observed, first in the village of Petrovsk, several of the women largely affected with goitre, and learned

* It was in one of these flat-bottomed boats that Mr. Hill descended the stream, in company with a Russian merchant, accomplishing the journey to Yakutsk in 21 days, with no worse mishaps by water than occasionally being driven on sand or mud banks, or into a forest of trees, all but submerged by the height of the spring floods.

Captain Cochrane chose a more independent course. Being furnished with a Cossack, he drove from Irkutsk to the Lena, and, having procured an open canoe and two men, paddled down the stream. Proceeding day and night, they usually made from 100 to 120 miles a day, finding hospitable villages at intervals of from 15 to 18 miles, as far as Kirensk, and so arrived on the eighth day at Vitimsk. It was now late in the autumn, and the ice began to come down the river, which sometimes compelled

with surprise that this malady, which in Europe characterises the valleys of the Alps, is frequent on the Lena. As he proceeded he found goitre in men also, and asking an exile at Turutsk, who appeared the only healthy person in the place, how he had protected himself from goitre, was told that adults arriving from Europe were never attacked by the disease, but that the goitre was born with the children of the district, and grew up with them. Medical men in Switzerland say that goitre proceeds from deposits in chemical combination, washed down by mountain streams that supply the inhabitants of the neighbourhood with drinking water, and that it attacks children on account of their mucous membranes being very tender and easily distended. Mr. Erman inquired carefully, as he went on, respecting the prevalency of goitre, and having made barometrical and other observations along the way, he came at length to the conclusion that the disease was traceable, in part, to the formation and altitude of various places along the valley of the river, where the air, being confined, is, in summer, heated to an extraordinary degree, and loaded with moisture.

With regard to the stream of the Upper Lena, its head waters have their sources spread out for 200 geographical miles along the counter slopes of the hills

the natives to strip, and, up to their waists in water, to track the boat, and this with the thermometer below freezing-point. At length the captain, in consequence of the difficulties of boating, was requested at one of the villages to proceed on horseback, which he did, and, being unable at the next station to get either horses or boat, he had to shoulder his knapsack and walk ; and so, by means of walking, riding, and paddling, he reached Olekminsk. From thence to Yakutsk is about 400 miles, which, excepting the two last stages, the captain completed in a canoe, arriving on the 6th October. The weather was cold, snow was falling, and on approaching Yakutsk the canoe was caught in the ice, so that he was compelled to make the remainder of his journey on foot.

that form the western bank of Lake Baikal, and the main stream rises within seven miles of the lake.

At Kachugskoe, about 60 geographical miles from the Baikal, and not less than 75 geographical miles in a straight line from its source, the Lena measures about the width of the Thames in London. The water, deep and clear, has in spring a very rapid current, though Captain Cochrane speaks of the rate lower down, in autumn, as only 1½ or 2 knots per hour. The next station after Kachugskoe is Vercholensk, a town of 1,000 inhabitants, the first of that size on the north-east of Irkutsk, and is the chief town of the uyezd. After flowing 500 miles further through a hilly country, with high banks always on one and sometimes on both sides, on which are 35 post-stations and more villages, the river passes Kirensk, which again is the chief town of an uyezd, and has a population of 800.* Here cultivation practically ceases, except for vegetables. At this point, too, the river receives on its right the Kirenga, which has run nearly as long a course as the Lena. The stream thus enlarged now flows on for 300 miles more to Vitimsk, where it is joined by its second great tributary, the Vitim, from the mountains east of Lake Baikal. Another stretch of 460 miles, through a country still hilly, but with villages less frequent, brings the traveller to Olekminsk, the capital of another uyezd, a town of 500 inhabitants; there the Lena receives from the south the Olekma, which rises near the Amur river. It then continues for 400 miles through a sparsely-

* The difference of latitude, as pointed out by Mr. Trelawney Saunders, between Verko (or upper) Lensk (54° 8′) and Kirensk (57° 47′) is only 3° 39′, or 219 geographical miles. The latter place is but little east of north from the former, so that the 500 miles must be mainly due to the windings of the stream.

populated district, till it reaches Yakutsk, where it is 4 miles wide in summer, and 2½ in winter, the river being usually frozen about the 1st October, and not free from ice till about May 25th.

Hitherto the course of the river has been to the north-east, but at Yakutsk the stream makes a bend and runs due north, receiving on its right, 100 miles below Yakutsk, one of its largest tributaries, the Aldan, which rises in the Stanovoi range bordering on the Sea of Okhotsk. Yakutsk is only 270 feet above the sea, and the current of the river henceforth is sluggish. About 50 miles further the Lena receives its largest tributary from the left, the Vilui, and then proceeds majestically through a flat country with an enormous body of water to the Arctic Ocean, into which it enters among a delta of islands formed of the *débris* brought down by the river.

In the region of the Lower Lena, and to the westward, have been found the remains of a huge rhinoceros, and an elephant larger than that now existing—the *elephas primigenius*, popularly called the mammoth. It is so named from the Russian *mamont*, or Tatar *mamma* (the earth), because the Yakutes believed that this animal worked its way in the earth like a mole; and a Chinese story represents the *mamentova* as a rat of the size of an elephant which always burrowed underground, and died on coming in contact with the outer air. The tusks of the mammoth are remarkable for exhibiting a double curve, first inwards, then outwards, and then inwards again; and Professor Ramsay gives it me as the opinion of several able naturalists that the so-called mammoth is of the same species as the Indian elephant, only much altered by the change

of climatic conditions. The Samoyedes say that the mammoth still exists wandering upon the shores of the Frozen Ocean, and subsisting on dead bodies thrown up by the surf. As for the rhinoceros, they say it was a gigantic bird, and that the horns which the ivory-merchants purchase were its talons. Their legends tell of fearful combats between their ancestors and this enormous winged animal.

A trade in mammoth ivory has been carried on for hundreds of years between the tribes of Northern Asia and the Chinese; but it was a long time before European naturalists took a marked interest in the evidence of an extinct order of animals which these remains undeniably recorded. The Siberian mammoth agrees exactly with the specimens unearthed in various parts of England, especially at Ilford in the valley of the Thames, near London, and on the coast of Norfolk; but whereas on European soil there remain but fragments of the skeleton, there have been found in Siberia bones of the rhinoceros and mammoth covered with pieces of flesh and skin. These discoveries date back more than a century.*

* In December, 1771, a party of Yakutes hunting on the Vilui, near its junction with the Lower Lena, discovered an unknown animal half-buried in the sand, but still retaining its flesh, covered with a thick skin. The carcase was too much decomposed to allow of more than the head and two feet being forwarded to Irkutsk; but they were seen by the great traveller and naturalist, Peter Simon Pallas, who pronounced the animal a rhinoceros, not particularly large of its kind, which might perchance have been born in Central Asia.

In the year 1799 a bank of frozen earth near the mouth of the Lena broke away, and revealed to a Tunguse, named Schumachoff, the body of a mammoth. Hair, skin, flesh and all had been preserved by the frost; and seven years later Mr. Adams, of the Petersburg Academy, hearing of the discovery at Yakutsk, visited the spot. He found, however, that the greater part of the flesh had been eaten by wild animals and the dogs of the natives, though the eyes and brains remained. The

In 1865 the captain of a Yenesei steamer learnt that some natives had discovered the preserved remains of a mammoth in latitude 67°, about 100 versts west of the river. Intelligence was sent to Petersburg, and Dr. Schmidt was commissioned to go and examine into the matter. Accordingly he proceeded down the Yenesei to Turukhansk, and thence to the landing-place nearest the mammoth deposit, hoping to obtain the animal's stomach, and, from the character of the leaves within, infer the creature's *habitat*, since it is known that the beast lived upon vegetable food, but of what exact character no one has yet determined. Unfortunately the stomach was wanting.

In examining, under the microscope, fragments of vegetable food picked out of the grooves of the molar teeth of the Siberian rhinoceros at Irkutsk, naturalists have recognised fibres of the pitch-pine, larch, birch, and willow, resembling those of trees of the same kind which still grow in Southern Siberia. This seems to confirm the opinion, expressed long ago, that the rhinoceros and other large pachyderms found in the alluvial soil of the north used to inhabit Middle Siberia, south of the extreme northern regions where

entire carcase measured 9 ft. 4 in. high, and 16 ft. 4 in. from the point of the nose to the end of the tail, without including the tusks, which were 9 ft. 6 in. in length if measured along the curves. The two tusks weighed 360 lbs., and the head and tusks together 414 lbs. The skin was of such extraordinary weight that ten persons found great difficulty in carrying it. About 40 lbs. of hair, too, were collected, though much more of this was trodden into the sand by the feet of bears which had eaten the flesh. This skeleton is now in the Museum of the Academy at Petersburg.

Again, in 1843, M. Middendorf found a mammoth on the Taz, between the Obi and the Yenesei, with some of the flesh in so perfect a condition that it was found possible to remove the ball of the eye, which is preserved in the Museum at Moscow.

their skeletons are now found; but Mr. Knox, who travelled for some distance with Schmidt on his return journey, says that the doctor estimated that the beast had been frozen many thousands of years, and that his natural dwelling-place was in the north, at a period when perhaps the Arctic regions were warmer than they now are. Covered with long hair, the animal could certainly resist an Arctic climate; but how on the tundras of the north could the animal have found the foliage of trees necessary for its subsistence? Must we conclude that formerly the country was wooded, or that the mammoth did not live where its skeletons are now found, but further south, whence its carcase has been carried northward by rivers, and frozen into the soil? These are questions debated among geologists, and still awaiting solution.

The fact, however, remains, that mammoth ivory is still an important branch of native commerce, and all travellers bear witness to the quantities of fossil bones found throughout the frozen regions of Siberia.*

Each year, in early summer, fishermen's barques

* It has been suggested that the abundant supplies of ivory which were at the command of the ancient Greek sculptors came by way of the Black Sea from the Siberian deposits. So far back as the time of Captain Billings, Martin Sauer, his secretary, tells us of one of the Arctic islands near the Siberian mainland, that "it is a mixture of sand and ice, so that when the thaw sets in and its banks begin to fall, many mammoth bones are found, and that all the isle is formed of the bones of this extraordinary animal." This account is to some extent corroborated by Figuier, who tells us that New Siberia and the Isle of Liakov are for the most part only an agglomeration of sand, ice, and elephants' teeth; and at every tempest the sea casts ashore new quantities of mammoths' tusks. Reclus speaks of an annual find of 15 tons of mammoth ivory, representing about 200 mammoths; and, about 1840, Middendorf estimated the number of mammoths discovered up to that time at 20,000.

direct their course to the New Siberian group, to the "*isles of bones*"; and, during winter, caravans drawn by dogs take the same route, and return charged with tusks of the mammoth, each weighing from 150 lbs. to 200 lbs. The fossil ivory thus obtained is imported into China and Europe, and is used for the same purposes as the ordinary ivory of the elephant and hippopotamus.

We cannot leave the Lower Lena and the neighbouring shores of the Arctic Ocean without alluding to the wonderful sight those shores witnessed in 1878, for the first time in the history of the world. It was no less a sight than that of two steam vessels that had ploughed their way from Europe round Cape Cheliuskin. One of them was the *Vega*, in which was Professor Nordenskjold, whose intention had been to anchor off the mouth of the Lena, but a favourable wind and an open sea offered so splendid an opportunity of continuing his voyage that he did not neglect it. He sailed away, therefore, on the 28th of August, direct for Fadievskoi, one of the New Siberian islands, where he intended to remain some days, and to examine scientifically the remains of mammoths, rhinoceroses, horses, aurochs, bisons, sheep, etc., with which these islands are said to be covered. The *Vega* made excellent progress, but though, on the 30th, Liakov Island was reached, the professor was unable to land, owing to the rotten ice which surrounded it, and the danger to which the vessel would have been exposed in case of a storm in such shallow water.

After the *Vega*, with Nordenskjold on board, had left its sister ship the *Lena*, the latter vessel, under the command of Captain Johannesen, started to ascend

the river of its own name. A pilot had been engaged to descend the river and await the arrival of the *Lena*, but as neither he nor his signals were visible, the captain, after considerable difficulty, from the shallowness of the water, made his way through the delta, and on the 7th September reached the main stream, where the navigation was less difficult. Yakutsk was reached on the 21st September, dispatches were sent on to Irkutsk, and from thence it was telegraphed to Europe that the rounding of Cape Cheliuskin and the navigation of the Lena by a steamer from the Atlantic had been accomplished.

CHAPTER XXV.

YAKUTSK.

The province of Yakutsk.—Rivers.—Minerals.—The town of Yakutsk.—Its temperature.—Inhabitants.—The Yukaghirs.—The Yakutes.—Their dwellings.—Food.—Dress.—Products.—Occupations.—Industries.—Language.—Religion.—Route from Yakutsk to Okhotsk.—Reindeer riding.—Summer journey.—Treatment of horses.

THE province of Yakutsk is the largest in Siberia, and covers an area of no less than a million and a half of square miles, and is therefore nearly as large as the whole of Europe, omitting Russia.* The total population of this enormous province is 235,000,—that is to say, it has about one-seventh part of an inhabitant to each square mile. The yearly number of marriages is 5,000, and the births 12,000. The Russian town population in 1876 numbered about 2,000, and the

* It is bounded on the north by the Arctic Ocean, on the west by the Yeneseisk, and on the east by the Sea-coast provinces; whilst on its south lie the three provinces of Irkutsk, Trans-Baikal, and the Amur. The northern and western portions of the province are flat, but towards the south and south-east are the Yablonoi and Stanovoi mountain ranges, continuations, in a north-easterly direction, of the mighty Altai chain. The great river of the province is the Lena, whose waters are drained from an area of 800,000 square miles. From the slopes on the western side of Baikal its upper portion runs in a north-easterly direction as far as Yakutsk, after which the Lower Lena runs due north to the Arctic Ocean. The total length of the river is about 2,500 miles, with a fall of 3,000 feet. East of the Lower Lena are the rivers Yana, Indigirka, and Kolima, all of which are navigable and of considerable size, though small by comparison with their gigantic sister.

country population 5,000; of which there were hereditary nobles, 100; personal nobles, 450; ecclesiastical persons, 600; military, 1,700; and the rest, upwards of 220,000, were natives—that is to say, Tunguses, Yukaghirs, and Yakutes. The natives are divided into communities, under *golovahs*, or mayors, of their own race, who are, however, subject to the Russian authorities. The province is divided into five uyezds.

The chief mineral product is gold, which has frequently to be procured from frozen ground. The valleys of the Vitim and Olekma especially are rich in this mineral. In the valley of the Vitim, about 200 versts from its mouth, are quarries of mica, from which the whole of Siberia was formerly supplied with a substitute for window-glass. Mr. Erman procured plates of brown mica from one to two feet square. As, however, I saw glass used everywhere, I presume that the demand for mica must have diminished greatly.

In the forests of the Vitim and Olekma are caught the smallest sables, with the finest, blackest, and hence most valuable furs. The squirrels of the district are hunted only in winter, when they are sometimes black and sometimes bright grey, their fur in summer being red, the hair loose, and skin valueless. The black realize the highest price, and are frequently met with south of the river, while north of the Lena none but grey are captured. The hunters think that this difference depends upon the nature of the forest.*

* There are, says M. Reclus, nearly 50 species of fur animals, and millions of specimens killed during the hunting season. The annual export of furs from Siberia, not including those taken from sea animals, represents a gross value of nearly half a million sterling. The fur which regulates the price of all others is that of the sable, which is worth at least from 16*s.* to £1, and sometimes commands, even in Siberia, as much as

The town of Yakutsk, which the natives proudly call "the city of the Yakutes," presents a curious medley of dwellings; for there are seen not only the Government buildings, and the wooden houses of the Russians, but also the less pretentious winter dwellings of the Yakutes, and even their summer yourts. Oxen here take the place of horses. Women and girls ride them astride; their sledges also are often drawn by them, the driver being mounted on one of the animals. The cathedral is built of stone, and dedicated to St. Nicolas; and there are in the town some half-dozen churches, in which certain parts of the service, if not the whole, are performed in the Yakute language. The chief ecclesiastic is Dionysius, Bishop of Yakutsk and Viluisk, who has in his hyperborean diocese 49 churches and chapels, and one monastery containing 13 monks.

Yakutsk has the credit of being the coldest place upon the face of the earth. The mean temperature of the air is 18·5 Fahrenheit. A degree of cold takes place there every year between the 17th December and 18th February, exceeding 58° below zero. During Mr. Erman's stay the cold reached even 71·5 below zero. Mercury, therefore, is frozen at Yakutsk for

£6 a skin. Only the back of the animal is used for the best garments, one of which may contain 80 skins, and rise to the value of nearly £500. The fur of the black fox is still more appreciated, and a single skin sometimes fetches £30. Squirrel skins by themselves constitute about a third of the Siberian revenue from furs; ten, twelve, and even fifteen millions of these animals being killed during their migrations in a single year. China receives a considerable number of these skins at Kiakhta, but more find their way to Europe. The furs brought to the fair of Irbit in the Urals in 1876 were as follows:—

Grey squirrels	5,000,000 skins	Martens of various kinds	750,000 skins
Ermines	215,000 ,,	Sables	12,000 ,,
Hares	300,000 ,,	Others	200,000 ,,
Foxes	82,000 ,,		

one-sixth of the year. An exceedingly warm summer follows this cold winter, and continues from about the 12th May to the 17th September. The ground is then thawed three feet deep, and though the crops rest on perpetually frozen strata, yet they produce fifteen-fold on an average, and in particular places forty-fold.*

Yakutsk has a population of 4,800, some of whom are political exiles, Scoptsi, etc., who live both here and in the villages along the river. It would require no great stretch of the imagination, however, to call all the Russian inhabitants exiles, for they are upwards of 5,000 miles from Petersburg.† As we travelled on the Obi we had for fellow-passengers an official with four children and a woman, bound for Yakutsk; and when, outside Tomsk, we saw the party stowed into one tarantass, we

* It is well known that in the northern parts of Siberia the ground is always frost-bound, but to what depth is not so easily determined. During the stay, however, of Mr. Erman at Yakutsk it happened that a resident was digging a well, down which the man of science went, and pronounced that he found the soil frozen to a depth of 50 feet below the surface. So accustomed, however, do the natives become to the cold, that with the thermometer at unheard-of degrees below freezing point, the Yakute women, with bare arms, stand in the open-air markets, chattering and joking as pleasantly as if in genial spring. Inside their houses, in the heated part of the rooms, they get the temperature up to 65° or 75°; but one day, when the thermometer stood at 9°, Mr. Erman found the children of both sexes running about quite naked, not only in the house, but even in the open air. In fact, the great cold is not thought a grievance in Siberia, for a man clothed in furs may sleep at night in an open sledge when the mercury freezes in the thermometer; and, wrapped up in his pelisse, he can lie without inconvenience on the snow under a thin tent when the temperature of the air is 30° below zero.

† I was told by a legal authority that some of the political exiles are sent to the province of Yakutsk, but, after the figures just quoted, it would seem that their number cannot be very large; of hereditary nobles in the province there were said to be, in 1876, only 100, and of personal nobles only 450. If, then, there be deducted from these the Governor and his staff, military officers, and tchinovniks of all grades, there would not be left a large margin for the class from which political exiles are thought to come, supposing, that is, that they are included in this return.

pitied them in prospect of the remainder of their 3,000 miles' journey.

The Russian population of the province is confined almost exclusively to the banks of the Upper Lena, Yakutsk, and its neighbourhood. The Tunguses are found at the extreme east and west of the province, and have been already spoken of in a previous chapter.

Of another race, the Yukaghirs, it may suffice to say that they were computed, in 1876, at only 1,600 in number, and that very little is known of them. They roam over a tract on the shores of the Northern Ocean lying between the Yana and the Kolima. They were once powerful, and on the rivers Yana and Indigirka tumuli and ancient burial-places are pointed out, containing corpses armed with bows, arrows, and spears. With these, too, lies buried the magic drum, well known in Lapland. At one time there were more hearths of the Yukaghirs on the banks of the Kolima than stars in the sky—so their legend says. These people maintain themselves during the whole year on the reindeer they kill in spring and autumn. At such seasons the mosquitoes drive the tormented animals to take refuge in the rivers, and not until winter is coming do they return to the woods, the stags leading the way, followed by the hinds and their young. Posted under cover, the Yukaghirs discover the place where the herd will make the passage of a stream, and conceal their canoes under the banks till the animals take the water. Then they push out, and, having cut the helpless deer off from either shore, proceed to slaughter them, whilst swimming, with long spears, which they use with marvellous skill.

The Yukaghirs are great smokers; their tobacco—the coarse species of the Ukraine—they mix with chips

to make it go further; and in smoking not a whiff is allowed to escape into the air, but all is inhaled and swallowed, producing an effect somewhat similar to a mild dose of opium. Tobacco is considered their first and greatest luxury. Women and children all smoke, the latter learning to do so as soon as they are able to toddle. Any funds remaining after the supply of tobacco has been laid in are devoted to the purchase of brandy. A Yukaghir, it is said, never intoxicates himself alone, but calls upon his family to share the drink, even children in arms being supplied with a portion.

In the centre of the Yakutsk province, occupying the valley of the Lena, roam the Yakutes, some of whom I met as far off as Nikolaefsk. They are of middle height, and of a light copper colour, with black hair, which the men cut close. The sharp lines of their faces express indolent and amiable gentleness rather than vigour and passion. They reminded me of North American Indians; and I agree with Erman, who says that their appearance is that of a people who have grown wild rather than of a thoroughly and originally rude race. Those I saw, however, having been long settled among the Russians, had perhaps become somewhat more polished than their wandering brethren. As a race they are good-tempered, orderly, hospitable, and capable of enduring great privation with patience; but in independence of character they contrast unfavourably with their Tunguse neighbours. Lay a finger in anger on one of the Tunguses, and nothing will induce him to forget the insult; whereas with the Yakutes, the more they are thrashed the better they work.*

* Strahlenberg divides them into 10 tribes, and Syboreen's Almanack for 1876 gives their number at 210,000. They belong to the great Turk family, and hence their Siberian locality is remarkable, because the Turks

The winter dwellings of the people have doors of raw hides, and log or wicker walls calked with cow-dung, and flanked with banks of earth to the height of the windows. The latter are made of sheets of ice, kept in their place from the outside by a slanting pole, the lower end of which is fixed in the ground. They are rendered air-tight by pouring on water, which quickly freezes round the edges; and the fact that it takes a long time to melt these blocks of ice thus fixed is highly suggestive of what the temperature must be, both without and within. The flat roof is covered with earth, and over the door, facing the east, the boards project, making a covered place in front, like the natives' houses in the Caucasus. Under the same roof are the winter shelters for the cows and for the people, the former being the larger. The fireplace consists of a wicker frame plastered over with clay, room being left for a man to pass between the fireplace and the wall. The hearth is made of beaten earth, and on it there is at all times a blazing fire, and logs of larch-wood throw up showers of sparks to the roof. Young calves, like children, are often brought into the house to the fire, whilst their mothers cast a contented look through the open door at the back of the fireplace. Behind the fireplace, too, are the sleeping-places of the people, which in the poorer dwellings consist only of a continuation of the straw laid in the cow-house.

In the winter they have but about five hours of day-light, which penetrates as best it can through the icy windows; and in the evening all the party sit round

have ever been the people to displace others, whereas the Yakutes have been themselves displaced, and driven into this inhospitable climate, it is supposed, by the stronger Buriats.

the fire on low stools, men and women smoking. The summer yourts of these people are formed of poles about 20 feet long, which are united at the top into a roomy cone, covered with pieces of bright yellow and perfectly flexible birch bark, which are not merely joined together, but are also handsomely worked along the seams with horsehair thread.

The houses are not overstocked with furniture, and the chief cooking utensil is a large iron pot. At the time of the invasion of the Russians, this article was deemed such a treasure that the price asked for a pot was as many sable-skins as would fill it. They use also in winter a bowl-shaped frame of wicker-work, plastered with frozen cow-dung, in which they pound their porridge. With regard to their food, the Yakutes, if they have their choice, love to eat horse-flesh; and their adage says that to eat much meat, and grow fat upon it, is the highest destiny of man. They are the greatest gluttons. So far back as the days of Strahlenberg, it was said that four Yakutes would eat a horse. They rarely kill their oxen for food; and at a wedding, the favourite dish served up by the bride to her future lord is a boiled horse's head, with horse-flesh sausages. When, however, horse-flesh or beef is wanting, they are not at all nice as to what they consume, for they eat the animals they take for fur, and woe to the unfortunate horse that becomes seriously injured in travel! It is killed and eaten then and there, the men taking off their girdles to give fair play to their stomachs, which swell after the fashion of a boa-constrictor. Thus earnestly do they aspire to their notion of the highest destiny of man! Milk is in general request among them, whether from cows or mares; and when they are

in the neighbourhood of the Russians, and can get flour, they do so; but far away in the forests they make a sort of porridge or bread, not exactly of sawdust, but of the under bark of the spruce, fir, and larch, which they cut in small pieces, or pound in a mortar, mixing it with milk, or with dried fish, or boiling it with glutinous tops of the young sprouts. In spring, when the sap is rising, they gather their bark harvest. They make also fermented beverages of milk; and in the height of summer, when the mares foal, an orgie is held, at which the men drain enormous bowls of this intoxicating liquor; whilst the women, denied the privilege of intoxication, solace themselves by getting as near to it as they can by smoking tobacco. The distillation of sour milk is also practised, producing a coarse spirit known as *arigui*. They devour likewise enormous quantities of melted butter. This also can be prepared in such a way as to cause intoxication when taken in sufficient quantities.

The dress of the Yakutes resembles in its main features that of the other natives of Siberia, save, perhaps, that they are fonder of ornaments. Both sexes riding a good deal on oxen and horses, a perpendicular slit is made up the back from the bottom of the *sanayakh*, or upper garment, in order to render the wearer comfortable in the saddle, and some of the women add behind them a cushion or pad, to save them from the rough motion of the animals. During the milder part of the year a robe, made of very pliable leather, stained yellow, is worn, which indoors is frequently laid aside, and males and females sit by the fire, leaving the upper part of the body naked. I bought a pair of women's Yakute boots of this leather.

TUNGUSE GIRLS IN WINTER COSTUME. *Page* 303.

They fit tight to the leg, and have at the top a flap of black velvet with red cloth trimming, which can be turned down and exposed for show in fair weather, or turned up, bringing the boots to the thighs. On each boot are two broad leather thongs, five or six feet long, to wind round the leg. Waterproof boots are here made, called by the Russians *torbasis*. These are cut from horse-hide, steeped in sour milk, then smoked, and finally rubbed well with fat and fine soot. They last exceedingly well, and are an inestimable comfort to the wearer, enabling him to tramp through snow, water, and mud without inconvenience.

The Yakute women are clever in making up fur garments. When visiting a Yakute family, I was looking about for a souvenir, and could at first see nothing to buy. In the room hung a curious cradle, very nearly resembling a coal-scuttle, which, when travelling, they suspend at the side of a reindeer; but this was too large for me to bring away. At length the materfamilias drew out a box in which she kept her treasures. Among these were some large pieces of fur, each consisting of an immense number of the small pieces of white skin that are found under the squirrel's neck. No piece was so large as the palm of the hand, and she had sewn them together with great industry. These I bought, much to the disgust of her daughter, for whom they were to have made a dandy garment. I purchased also of the old lady what I prized more, namely, an "*itti*," or large cap, coming down with flaps at the ears. The crown is made of the skins of sables' feet, and it has a border all round of the fur of sables' tails. The sight of this, since my return, has often excited the admiration of my lady friends.

The Yakutes who inhabit the inclement region adjacent to the Frozen Ocean have neither horses nor oxen, but breed large numbers of dogs, which draw them to and fro on their fishing excursions. Even those living on the 62nd parallel keep cattle under far greater difficulties than usual, for they have to make long journeys to collect hay, and do not always find enough. The cold prevents their breeding sheep, goats, or poultry. Nevertheless, cattle and hunting are their chief means of subsistence, for they do not in general cultivate the land, though in the gardens at Yakutsk are grown potatoes, cabbages, radishes, and turnips; gherkins, too, are reared in hot-beds.

Some products of Yakutsk industry are purchased by the Russians, particularly floor-cloths of white and coloured felts, which are cut in strips and sewed together like mosaic. From the earliest times they have been able to procure and work for themselves metals.*

The language of the Yakutes, which is largely spoken by the Russians who live among them, is one of the principal means by which we are led to assume their Turkish origin, for Latham says their speech is intelligible at Constantinople, and their traditions (for literature they have none) bespeak a southern origin.

* The iron ore of the Vilui was smelted by the Yakutes long before the advent of the Russians, and the other tribes got from them iron axes, awls, and tools for stripping and dressing hides. The Yakutes also make copper ornaments for clothes and harness, and the metal plates which they sew on their girdles. Even now, although they use European guns, they still make for themselves the great knife, or dagger, which is worn at the waist. The Yakutsk steel is more flexible than the Russian, and yet blades made of it will cut copper or pewter as easily as European blades.

Here are some Yakute words compared with Turkish :—

English.	Yakute.	Turk.	English.	Yakute.	Turk.
Yes	*Sittee*	Evet	One	*Bare*	Bir
No	*Socht*	Yokh	Two	*Akee*	Eekee
Well	*Outchigey*	Peky, Aee	Three	*Oose*	Ootch
Bad	*Thoosahane*	Fené	Four	*Terte*	Dort
Bread	*Astobitt*	Ek-mek	Five	*Baiss*	Besh
Water	*On*	Soo	Six	*Alta*	Altee
Beef	*Augauss*	Seyir	Seven	*Sett*	Yedee
Horse	*Att*	Att	Eight	*Agaouss*	Autuz
Road	*Coll*	Yol	Nine	*Togouss*	Tokuz
Man	*Kissi*	Kissi, Adami	Ten	*Owni*	On
Woman	*Jaiktorr*	Aorat	Eleven	*Onordoubis*	On-bir
Tree	*Marss*		Twelve	*Okorduchi*	On-eekee
Rain	*Samirr*	Yaghmoor	Twenty	*Surbia*	Igirme

Strahlenberg calls these people Pagans, but the latest writers call them Christians; and the method of their conversion was, it is said, extraordinary, for the Russian priests not making much headway against their superstitions, an ukase was one day issued setting forth that the good and loyal nation of the Yakutes were thought worthy to enter, and were consequently admitted into, the Russian Church, to become a part of the Tsar's Christian family, and entitled to all the privileges of the rest of his children. Such was the tenor of this strange proclamation, and success attended the measure. The new Christians showed perfect sincerity in the adoption of their novel faith, and the Russian priests have established their sway over the Yakute race, though amongst the outlying portion a lingering belief in Shamanism still survives, of which travellers from Yakutsk to Okhotsk have been made aware by their Yakute guides leaving them awhile in foggy weather, and stealing off into the forest to perform certain mysterious rites.

The distance from Yakutsk to Okhotsk is 800 miles

and the journey, whether undertaken in summer or winter, is one of the severest. The map gives one the idea that it might almost be accomplished by ascending the river Aldan and one of its affluents to the Stanovoi mountains. The usual plan, however, is to leave Yakutsk on horseback, with all the luggage on pack-saddles. Some estimate may be formed of the traffic once passing on this route from the fact that there were formerly employed in it from 20,000 to 30,000 horses. The postal service is still continued between Irkutsk and the Sea of Okhotsk; but there is no telegraph; hence the fact of Professor Nordenskjold having been frozen in the ice on the north-east coast of Siberia was brought a long way by courier before it could be made known by telegram to Europe.

One of the difficulties of the winter journey is the insufficient sleeping accommodation on the route. The houses, when they exist, are very bad, and when they fail, travellers sleep in a tent, or else upon furs and wraps in the open air. They usually lie, however, by a roaring fire, and so roast on one side whilst they freeze on the other—changing their position when need requires.

After proceeding for some distance the traveller has to exchange his horse for a novel kind of steed—a reindeer, on which the mere gaining of one's seat, to say nothing of keeping it, is by no means so easy as might be supposed.* Having gained his reindeer

* To get on the animal's *back*, as one would mount a donkey, would probably cripple the deer for life. The saddle is therefore placed on its shoulder close to the neck, and to mount, the rider, holding the bridle, stands at the right side of the animal, with his face turned forwards. He then raises his left foot to the saddle, which he never touches with his hands, and springing with the right leg, and aided also by a pole, which

seat, the English traveller may keep it—if he can. He will most likely fall off half-a-dozen times in the first quarter of an hour, until he discovers that he must poise himself in such a manner that his body may continually, and with ease, lend itself to a swinging motion.* There is a second lesson to be learned by the uninitiated, which is usually imparted in a very impressive manner; for should the cavalier attempt to hold with the knees, and the cushion consequently slip back, the moment the weight is felt on the animal's back, he bends under his haunches and lets the rider slip to the ground, and that perhaps in ice, snow, or a pool of water.

As the traveller approaches Okhotsk he has again to change his mode of conveyance, to be drawn this time by dogs. All three methods of travel have their delights on this lonely journey, the tedium of which is sometimes relieved by an extemporary hunting scene.†

he holds in his right hand, he gains his seat. The native girls and women are as expert in this jumping as the men, and rarely want assistance in mounting.

* The practised reindeer riders acquire the habit of striking gently with the heel, alternately right and left, at every step, just behind the animal's shoulders. This is done, not for the purpose of stimulating the deer, but because the motion described is the surest means of maintaining equilibrium. The staff, too, with which the rider mounts is carried in his hand, and is used for maintaining an equipoise in riding; but any attempt of the rider, in the first critical moment, to support himself by resting the staff on the ground, is sure to end in his being unseated.

† Mr. Erman describes the killing, during his journey, of a wild sheep, and the joy of the Yakutes at the prospect of getting fresh meat for supper. One of them cried out characteristically, "I will stay awake the whole night, and eat till we set out." Whilst the carcase was being prepared, every one cut for himself some thin wooden skewers, on which he spitted a row of little bits of meat. These were only appetizers, to be followed by large pieces boiled in the pot. The hunter, however, who had killed the sheep claimed as his perquisite the animal's head; the brains, as a

The difficulties of the summer journey are somewhat different in character. A large part of the way lies over swampy ground, on which the causeways are not kept in repair, and where the horses flounder in mud and water, into which they occasionally pitch the rider. It is no uncommon thing for horses to die under the fatigues of the way. The Yakutes, moreover, have a cruel fashion of giving their horses little food whilst journeying. A similar custom obtains farther east, among the Gilyaks, where I found that, though they gave a dog two pieces of fish daily when at home, yet, when travelling, they gave him only one, because the dogs immediately after eating are always lazy and feeble.*

These, then, are some of the difficulties of the old route, from Irkutsk to the Pacific, which happily it did not fall to my lot to be obliged to encounter; but I crossed the Baikal instead, and, after making a *détour* to the Chinese frontier, continued across the Buriat steppe to the Amur.

special delicacy, he sucked out raw, and cut out the eyes to be dressed for his own exclusive benefit.

* It does not appear that the Yakutes are otherwise cruel to their horses, for Erman relates that, on going up to a horse that had carried him many miles, to pat his neck by way of saying adieu, the Yakutes came up and embraced the other horses, putting their arms round their necks and hugging them like children. Mr. Hill, too, discovered in a very practical way the regard of the Yakutes for their horses, when, food having run short, and after a dinner of only cranberries and nuts, he proposed that one of the animals should be killed and eaten, the Yakutes replied that they never killed one of their horses until they had passed five whole days together without any sort of food. It would be a shame, they said, that while they had tea and a morsel of sugar, and the prospect before them of getting other food, one of the poor creatures should be slain. Mr. Hill, therefore, and his merchant friend had to take their guns and hunt for game, with a keenness which they had never known before.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ACROSS LAKE BAIKAL TO TROITZKOSAVSK.

Leaving Irkutsk.—The Angara.—Approach to the Baikal.—Its shores and fish.—Steaming across.—Seizing post-horses.—Arrival at Verchne Udinsk.—Smuggling at the prison.—Arrival at Selenginsk.—English mission to Buriats.—English graves.—Old scholars.—Story of the mission.—Journey to Troitzkosavsk.

WE left Irkutsk on Thursday, July 10th, after a stay that could hardly be called enjoyable, though amid the confusion we met with much more consideration than could have been expected. For the first night we slept, as already stated, in our tarantass, and I took my morning bath in the pantry. What a treat, too, was that bath, deliciously cold from the Angara, to a man who had not taken his clothes off for more than a week! During our stay we made the acquaintance of several officers, of whom there is no lack at Irkutsk, as there are usually in barracks about 2,000 troops. It was very difficult to procure provisions. On sending out on the morning of our departure, all the white bread that could be found was one penny loaf, and that somewhat stale. It seemed, therefore, that I should have to come down to rye bread; but some pancakes were made for me, the difficulty was thus surmounted, and by two o'clock we had fairly begun our 300 miles to Kiakhta. Our baggage and remaining books were still too heavy to

be taken on the same vehicle, and we therefore stowed away ourselves and our personal effects in the tarantass, and the boxes followed in a post-conveyance, out of which they were changed at every station. We wished to make only 40 miles before night, to Lake Baikal, and then wait till morning at Listvenitznaya for the steamer.

We had not proceeded far before we drove along the banks of the Angara, which is, in some respects, the most remarkable river in Siberia. There are scores of streams and rivulets running into Lake Baikal, of which the more important are the Upper Angara, the Barguzin, and the Selenga; but the Angara is the only one that runs out, and it does so with such impetuosity that the rapid by which the water leaves the lake never freezes even with the temperature of the air at 24° below zero; and though the ice is six feet thick on the lake, yet, all the winter through, ducks float on the bosom of the rapid. I have heard it suggested that there may be hot-springs just there; but whether this is so or not, the waters of the lake and the Angara are particularly cold.*

Shortly after leaving Irkutsk the road enters a wooded part of the Angara valley, and as the road winds along it, many points are passed presenting magnificent views. In some parts enormous sand-

* As we approached Telma my thermometer at noon in the shade stood at 85°, and when crossing a stream called the Ija, the temperature of the water was 70°; but coming on the same day to the Angara, nearly 100 miles from Baikal, the temperature of the river was only 50°; and when crossing the Baikal itself, the atmosphere registered 45° and the water only 40°. The Angara is the last river in Siberia to close, which it does about New Year's Day (sometimes not till the middle of January); and the first to open, namely, about the 11th April. The lake is 1,200 feet above the sea level, and the current of the river is remarkably swift, as

stone cliffs arise out of the water, crowned with dark pines and cedars; in others the thick forest descends to the river's brink, and the broad sheet of water is seen rushing madly onwards. Afterwards the valley becomes more rugged, with deep ravines running up into the mountains. Beyond this the road has been cut along the edge of a cliff at a considerable height above the river, and, about five miles before reaching the Baikal, a scene is presented that may well cause the traveller to stop. The valley becomes wider, and the mountains rise abruptly to a much greater elevation. The Angara is here more than a mile in width, and this great body of water is seen rolling down a steep incline, forming a rapid nearly four miles in length. At the head of this, and in the centre of the stream, a great mass of rock rises, called the *Shaman Kamen*, or "Priest," or "spirit's stone," held sacred by the followers of Shamanism, and not to be passed by them without an act of devotion. When Shamanism prevailed in this neighbourhood, human sacrifices were made at the sacred rock, the victim with his hands tied being tossed into the torrent below. Beyond is the broad expanse of the Baikal, extending about 50 miles, to where its waves wash the foot of Amar Daban, whose summit, even in June, is usually covered with snow. The mighty torrent throwing up its jets of spray, the rugged rocks with their fringes of

the traveller will infer should he overtake a barge being towed against the stream by perhaps 20 horses. Though the distance is only 40 miles from Irkutsk, a barge takes three days to be dragged up to the rapid, and then for the rapid itself it requires another day, even with double the number of horses. This refers, however, to a large *soudno*, or vessel, with a bluff bow and broad stern, which might almost as well sail sideways as speed ahead, and usually carries 600 chests and 25,000 bricks of tea.

pendent birch overtopped by lofty pines, and the colouring on the mountains, produce a picture of extraordinary beauty and grandeur. A few miles further, and the Baikal is seen spreading out like a sea, and its waves are heard beating on the rocky shore.

The storms on the lake are very severe. They say, at Irkutsk, it is only upon the Baikal in the autumn that a man learns to pray from his heart. The most dangerous wind is the north-west. It is called the mountain wind, whilst that from the south-west is called the "*deep* sea-breeze." Formerly, in crossing, it was no uncommon occurrence for a boat or barge to be detained three weeks on a voyage of 40 miles, without being able to land on either shore. This induced an enterprising merchant to have a hull built on the lake, and engines, boiler, and machinery brought 4,000 miles overland from Petersburg; and when the new vessel steamed across in a gale, both Siberians and Mongols looked on with not a little astonishment.*

The fish of the Baikal are abundant, and are caught in variety, such as the *omullé*, somewhat like the herring; the *suig*, which resembles but is smaller than the sturgeon; the *askina*, the pike, the carp, the *lavaret*, and a white fish called the *tymain*. Travellers

* The basin of the lake is about 400 miles in length and 35 miles in width, covering an area of 14,000 square miles. It has a circumference of nearly 1,200 miles. This, therefore, is the *largest fresh-water lake* in the Old World; and, next to the Caspian and the Aral, is the largest inland sheet of water in Asia. Several travellers have crossed the lake *en route* from or to Irkutsk, but Mr. Atkinson did more. He spent several days exploring its coasts, and, turning to the east from Listvenitznaya, he found the shore became exceedingly abrupt for 20 miles, with many striking scenes, in which waterfalls played a part. The north shore is the most lofty. In some parts the precipices rise 900 feet, and, a little beyond the Arga, to 1,200 feet. Basaltic cliffs also appear rising from

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also tell of a remarkable fish called the *golomain*, which is only seen when thrown on shore during a violent tempest, and is of so oily a nature that it melts in the sun, or on the approach of heat, leaving only its skeleton and skin. It is a remarkable fact also that the seal of the ocean is found in the lake. About 2,000 are killed yearly.

The natives call the lake *Svyatoe More*, the "Holy Sea," and aver that no one was ever lost in its waters; for when a person is drowned therein, the waves invariably throw his body on shore. It must be a pleasant sensation to cross this lake in winter. The ice is as clear, transparent, and as smooth as glass, so that travellers describe the difficulty of realizing that they are not gliding on water. The journey across is made in a remarkably short time. Mr. Erman travelled thus 7 German miles (or 27 English) in 2¼ hours, which for horse travelling must be allowed to be extraordinary. Formerly there was a winter station on the ice, half-way across, for changing horses; but as the ice on one occasion gave way, and allowed the whole concern to disappear, they now cross the lake at a single stage. There is a road round the south end of the lake, but in summer the crossing by steamer is usually preferred.

deep water to an elevation of 700 feet. A little more than a boat's length from shore, soundings have been taken to the depth of 900 feet. Greater depths than this, however, have been reached. The captain of the steamer informed Mr. Atkinson that on one occasion he had run out 2,100 feet of line without finding bottom; and in 1872 soundings were taken at the south-west end, showing 3,600 feet: hence the common saying that the Baikal has no bottom. The shore exhibits, besides the basalt just named, other unquestionable evidences of volcanic action, and in some of the ravines are great masses of lava. Hot mineral springs likewise exist in several parts of the surrounding mountain-chain.

We reached the station about six or eight hours after leaving Irkutsk, and, passing the night at a rough hotel, next morning got our tarantass on board, among half-a-dozen others, and steamed across. The steamer was called the *General Korsakoff*. It made a loud grunting, and out of its tall chimney emitted a cloud of sparks like the tail of a comet. I went below to see the engines, and found them of the most primitive kind—a huge boiler simply laid in a wooden hull. I offered for sale on board some of my books, and gave others away. This soon got me friends, and the engineer honoured me by playing a tune on his concertina. I went also into the captain's cabin, and he was glad to buy some New Testaments. It was so chilly, however, on deck that I put on my ulster, and stowed myself away in the tarantass; after doing which, on the 11th of July, it was not difficult to believe what I had heard, that pigeons flying across the lake in winter sometimes drop dead from cold.

As we drew near to the shore, we had the enjoyment of a mild piece of something like revenge. I have already observed that the traveller who has a crown podorojna takes precedence; but if two travellers come to a station, *both* having crown podorojnas, he who arrives first takes the horses. Moreover, "the rule of the road" is that one set of post-horses must not outstrip one that has started before; which rule, however, an extra tip to the yemstchik will sometimes evade. Now, as we came towards Irkutsk, we had been outstripped by a military officer travelling with his wife, who took the fresh horses we should have had; so that, when we arrived, it was feared we should be without. Whereupon the officer's wife, addressing

me in French, asked half-triumphantly, and half in a mischievous joke, whether I did not find myself "without horses"? She happened, however, to be wrong. We obtained horses, and, at night, overtook our friends, broken down, with their tarantass undergoing repairs at another station. We therefore got ahead, till, on the Baikal, they overtook us again. We saw at a glance that there would be a rush for horses, and, therefore, immediately the boat touched, I sprang ashore, presented to the post-master my podorojna, and secured my team; whereas the officer, not knowing that I had more than an ordinary civilian's paper, or relying, perhaps, upon the power of his crown podorojna, was not so quick, and failed to get his steeds; and as we rolled away we heard him storming at the post-master for allowing us to have them before he had been served.

We drove for some distance on an elevated plateau beside the eastern shore of the lake, from which we got many good views of its waters, and where we observed at the roadside red Turk's-head lilies, similar to but smaller than those seen in English gardens, and yellow lilies. There were likewise in the neighbourhood abundance of strawberries, raspberries, and whortleberries. Among the trees were cedars up to 120 feet in height; also the balsam poplar, which here attains a growth sufficiently large to allow the natives of the coast to make their canoes of a single log; likewise the cherry-tree and the Siberian apple. A black and white jackdaw, as my companion called it, made its appearance; and the birds of prey appeared more numerous, as they well might be in the vicinity of a larger animal population; for in these Baikal forests are found martens,

squirrels, foxes, wolves, the lynx, the elk, the wild boar, and the bear—the last feeding on berries in summer, and on cedar-nuts raked up from beneath the snow in winter.

Having taken the lead on the road from the Baikal, we were anxious to keep it, though things looked threatening on arriving at the first station, where the post-master said there were no horses. We brought our crown podorojna to bear, and then the letter of the Minister at Petersburg, but to no purpose. There were no post-horses, he said, though there was a man standing near who would lend us private horses at double fares. To this we should have had to agree, but we pulled out lastly our *blanco* letter, and this gained the day; for the post-master, on seeing that, said to the would-be extortioner, "You must let them have the horses"; and so on we trotted through a country more hilly than anything we had passed, till at six o'clock we arrived at Verchne Udinsk. This place might very well be called "the Amur and China Junction," for to turn to the left brings the traveller to the Pacific, and to turn to the right leads to Peking.

It was now Saturday afternoon, and we were anxious to get on, if possible, a few stations further, to Selenginsk, which was the scene of the labours of some English missionaries, and there to spend the Sunday to inquire about their work. The old difficulty of horses, however, cropped up, for they could let us have none on the instant, and every one was on tiptoe expecting the passing through of the Governor-General, Baron Friedrichs. I have already mentioned that his Excellency was at some mineral springs on the Mongolian frontier, and, having heard of the fire at Irkutsk, he

was now returning. Everything, therefore, had to be in readiness. The post-house was swept and garnished, and we were requested not to go into the large guest-room, where the tables and chairs were arranged for his Excellency's visit. Horses, however, were promised quickly as a favour, and meanwhile we strolled into the town.

Verchne—that is, Upper—Udinsk is the capital of an uyezd, and has a population of 3,500. It is a clean little town, and, upon entering the market square, it was easy to see that we were approaching the borders of the Celestial Empire—for here was John Chinaman, with open shop, standing behind the counter selling tea. We found also, to our great satisfaction, a baker's shop, where was not only white bread, but all manner of bake-meats, of which we proceeded to make havoc then and there. The white bread was 75 per cent. dearer than at Tobolsk, but I was only too thankful to get a store at any price, my pancakes being all but gone. For lemonade they asked 6*s.* a bottle, or 6*d.* a glass. It was like watered lemon syrup. Fresh butter cost a rouble a pound, and was obtained with difficulty.

There is a prison in Verchne Udinsk, which we passed at the side of the road, and the prisoners were looking from the windows. Here had recently occurred an incident illustrative of Goryantchikoff's statement, in his "Buried Alive," that some of his fellow-prisoners were spirit-dealers, and frequently smuggled liquor into the prison in the entrails of cows or oxen. For this purpose the entrails were washed and filled with water, to keep them damp and ready to receive the liquor. When filled, they were wound by the smuggler round his body and thighs, and so brought into the prison.

On the afternoon of our arrival, a drunken woman had been detected thus carrying in *vodka*. We did not visit the building, but left with the Ispravnik half-a-dozen New Testaments, and the same number of Gospels for Tatars, and of Scripture portions in Mongolian. The present was not unappreciated, for the Ispravnik, learning that I was going to the far east, gave me an introduction to his son-in-law at Blagovestchensk, which afterwards proved useful.

At last we started, and trotted on through the night to Selenginsk, and spent there the remainder of the following day. We called on the Ispravnik, who, with his wife, received us politely; and the latter, finding that we had good books to dispose of, wished to purchase some, which I allowed her to do to the value of three roubles. We also asked the Ispravnik's acceptance of some portions of Scripture in Mongolian for distribution among the surrounding Buriats. Then conversation followed about the English mission, of which Selenginsk was for 13 years the head-quarters, but ceased to be so about 40 years ago.

The Ispravnik had nothing to say of the missionaries but what was good and kind,—a repetition of what I had heard elsewhere. A house, he told us, was still standing on the spot where the missionaries lived, and he furnished us with the names of persons who could give us further information. We went, therefore, direct to the site of the mission station, where we found some out-buildings, very much like those of an English farmyard, and strongly suggestive of home. There was also a nice house, which had been built near the spot on which formerly stood the one inhabited by the Englishmen. The garden remained, and in it

we were taken to a walled enclosure—a little graveyard—in which were five graves: those of Mrs. Yule, Mrs. Stallybrass, and three children. The place had been recently renovated, at the expense of a missionary in China, and we were pleased to see the resting-place of our compatriots looking so neat and orderly. The garden commanded a pretty view of the valley of the Selenga, and there was pointed out across the river the site on which the town stood in the early part of the century, till, being destroyed by fire, it was rebuilt on the opposite side. The lady who occupied the house told us that now and then a traveller turns aside to see the spot, and that the ignorant people say that the English people come out of their graves at night—a report she is at no pains to contradict, on the plea that, as the house is in a lonely position, the idea may conduce to protect her from thieves.

After having been shown what there was of interest about the place, we called on an old man—a Russian—named Ivlampi Melnikoff, who, in his boyhood, had attended the mission school. When he heard that one of the missionaries, Mr. Stallybrass, was still living, and that I had seen him just before leaving England, he seemed much pleased, and spoke with affection of his teachers. He had not opened a book for 40 years, and so had forgotten how to read, but he remembered, and inquired particularly for, some of the missionaries' sons, and sent to them his respects. The old man had lost sight of his Buriat schoolfellows, and thought that not one of them became a Christian, though he afterwards remembered that one was baptized into the Russian Church. Besides this old Russian we saw the nephew of one who had been a pupil in the

school, and heard of an old man living some 35 versts distant, still a Buriat, who, as a boy, had been a scholar. We had the same testimony from both witnesses, that has been repeated by several travellers, that the missionaries did not baptize a single convert. None of them, however, said what I did not know until I returned to England, and spoke to Mr. Stallybrass upon the subject, namely, that the missionaries were under agreement with the Russian Government *not* to baptize any converts.*

We continued our journey from Selenginsk for twelve hours more, through a country which gave me my first

* The story of the mission seemed to be this :—At the beginning of the present century there were four parties of foreign Protestant missionaries working in the Russian dominions, namely, (1) the Presbyterians, in the south of European Russia ; (2) the Moravians, on the Volga ; (3) some Swiss missionaries from Basle, who took the place of the Presbyterians, and worked upon their ground ; and (4) the London Missionary Society, which was allowed to send men to the Buriats in Siberia. Among the last company were Messrs. Stallybrass, Swan, and Yule, who saw at once that the first thing to be done was to translate the Scriptures. Mr. Stallybrass left England in 1817, and lived in Irkutsk for a year and a half to learn the Mongolian language. In due time the translation was commenced, from the original Hebrew and Greek, and with such success did the work go on that they actually printed the Old Testament in their Siberian wilderness at Verchne Udinsk, to which place the missionaries removed from Selenginsk, and where they remained till they were sent home in 1840. The New Testament was printed in London. Their work was, therefore, of a preparatory and fundamental, rather than an aggressive, character. Nevertheless, they had a school, numbering, sometimes, from 15 to 20 scholars; but there was found a special difficulty in inducing children to attend, for not only were their parents utterly ignorant of the value of education, but they wanted the children to help them tend their flocks, grazing, not on settled pasturage, but as they wandered over the vast extent of the Trans-Baikal and the Mongolian steppes. Hence the children were at school to-day and gone to-morrow ; and even when parents could be induced to leave their children with the missionaries during their own absence with their flocks, these children had to be kept and fed as boarders, and even then the parents begrudged the loss of their services. The object, however, of the Englishmen began to be appreciated, and tokens of success appeared. Then came the difficulty

experience of a Russian steppe, a tract of undulating land with a sandy soil, covered with a little grass and a reedy-looking herb, but suffering from a lack of humidity, as the tundra suffers from lack of warmth. Trees were visible only here and there, but water was abundant, sometimes in large lakes; so that the hilly roads, the expanse of water, and the treeless waste, reminded me sometimes of the scenery of our Wiltshire downs, and, in one or two places, of the English lakes. As we approached our destination the road became more and more sandy, and very heavy for the horses; but at last, on Monday, the 14th July, we reached Kiakhta.

which all along had loomed in the distance. The Russian Synod, in its jealousy for its own Church, had expressly stipulated that the missionaries should receive no converts by baptism, and this had been agreed to, and, of course, kept. But when certain of the Buriats showed signs of having received the truth, in the love of it, the missionaries found themselves in a dilemma. The Russians wished the converts to be handed over for baptism to their Church, and, on these terms, were willing that the English should stay and work as hard as they pleased; but this did not satisfy the men, nor the committee of the London Missionary Society, and neither party was disposed to give way. About this time, however, great political changes had taken place. Alexander I., who favoured Christian missions, had died, and was succeeded by the iron Nicolas, who does not seem to have been particularly opposed to missions; but the Synod was jealous of foreign interference, and an occasion was found for dismissing all foreign missionaries from the Russian dominions, under the pretext that the Synod wished to do all its own mission work for its own heathen. The Imperial ukase to this effect was issued in 1840, and thus a mission was stopped whose foundations were laid by the English, and which produced a translation of the whole Bible printed in Buriat Mongolian. It had taught some few scholars of great promise, one of whom, at least, named Shagder, it was known (and probably many more did so unknown), was afterwards baptized into the Russian Church. How far the Russian missionaries among this people owe any portion of their success to the foundation thus laid I cannot say. Of the Russian mission I shall speak hereafter.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SIBERIAN FRONTIER AT KIAKHTA.

Hospitable reception.—History of Kiakhta.—Treaties between Russians and Chinese.—Early trading.—Decline of commerce.—The tea trade.—Troitzkosavsk church.—Miraculous ikons.—Kiakhta church.—Russian churches in general.—Bells.—Valuable ikons.—Climate of Kiakhta.—Drive to Ust-Keran.

I HAVE said in the previous chapter that we reached Kiakhta. It would have been more accurate to have said Troitzkosavsk, which is within sight of and may be called a suburb of Kiakhta, situated on the Siberian frontier. Here we were lodged, for by the terms of a treaty between Chinese and Russians, no officer or stranger may sleep in Kiakhta proper. On arriving, we learned, to our dismay, that there was no hotel or guest-house in either town. We therefore went to the office of the Ispravnik, and in his absence showed our documents, which served so far to establish our respectability, that we were told we might have accommodation at the police-station. For this offer of course we were grateful, but, before accepting it, we thought we would present some of our letters of introduction. One was addressed to Mr. Tokmakoff, a first-class merchant in the place; but he was away in Mongolia, and his wife and family were living at their summer house "in the country." We had another letter, given me by Mr. Larsen, the telegraphist at Irkutsk, to Mr.

Koecher, the principal of the *real* or commercial school, who lived in one of the best houses of the town, and who, upon our presenting the letter, immediately pressed us to take up our abode with him. We were only too thankful to do so, and, after a fortnight's inconveniences in sleeping, to find ourselves in quarters with proper and comfortable beds. Our host was living bachelor fashion, and was expecting to leave shortly for Petersburg; his wife had already preceded him. He spared no pains to make us comfortable, and, being thus settled, we had time to look about the place, which, on leaving England, had been the utmost bound to which my travelling imagination had carried me. The Mohammedans say, "See Mecca and expire"; the Italians, "See Naples and die"; and in somewhat of the same spirit I had fixed upon Kiakhta as the *ultima thule* of my Siberian wanderings: not that there is much that is remarkable in the physical aspect of the place, but from Kiakhta one walks out of Siberia into China and sees the blue hills of Mongolia. The town, moreover, has a history, and was the scene of a treaty between the two largest empires in the world.

So far back as the 17th century, trade was carried on, though not protected by Government, between the Siberians and their southern neighbours the Chinese.*

* In 1655 a Russian embassy was sent to Peking, with a view to the arrangement of a commercial treaty. The route then lay from Tobolsk up the Irtish to its source, over the Altai mountains, through the vast domain of the Kalmuks, and across the Mongolian steppes. The Russian envoy, however, refused to lie down and submit to Chinese etiquette in approaching the Emperor, and was sent away, partly, perhaps, for his want of obsequiousness, and more, perhaps, because the Chinese did not see the need of a treaty, the boundaries of the two empires being then not so perfectly in contact as now. A second embassy, sent in 1675, proved also a failure; but after this there happened a series of events which caused the Chinese to realize that the Russians were nearer neighbours

But in 1692 a treaty was made at Nertchinsk, opening the way to regular and permanent commerce between the two countries, though subject to certain vexatious forms and restrictions. Subsequently Peter the Great, seeing the advantage of this treaty, desired that the privilege of trading with China, then confined to individuals, should be extended to caravans; and, the Emperor approving, the right of trading thus was appropriated as a monopoly by the Russian Crown.

So things went on till 1722, when, the Russians offending their celestial neighbours, the Chinese Emperor expelled all Muscovites from his dominions, and brought trading affairs to a standstill. Six years later the treaty of Kiakhta was concluded, which stipulated that a caravan of not more than 200 persons should visit Peking every three years, and that the subjects of each nation, though not allowed to cross the frontier with their wares, might dispose of them to each other at two places on the border—Kiakhta, and Tsurukhaitu on the Argun, about 60 miles from Nertchinsk. This led to the foundation of the town of Kiakhta; and as there were certain conditions in the treaty limiting the number of persons, and imposing various restrictions upon those who should live there, another town was built a mile off, and called Troitzkosavsk, in which these restrictions were evaded.*

than they had been accustomed to regard them. This was brought about by the advances of the Siberians in the region of the Amur, where they had taken up their abode among the Daurians and other tribes, whom they so far encroached upon as to cause the Daurians to appeal for aid to the Chinese. This aid was given, and thus the Chinese and the Russians came first to blows in 1684.

* Kiakhta became the centre of Russo-Chinese commerce, which was greatly increased after 1762, when Catherine II. abolished the Crown monopoly of the fur trade, together with the exclusive privilege of sending

The traveller of to-day does not see Kiakhta as it was in palmy times, though a considerable trade is still carried on between China and Eastern Siberia, and large consignments are sent to Nijni Novgorod and Moscow. The tradition is still kept up that the sea passage injures the flavour of the herb, and that caravan tea is the best, which commands, accordingly, prices up to ten shillings per pound. I have heard quite recently of "yellow" tea, which even at Kiakhta costs this sum, and which, brought overland, would probably command in Petersburg 16*s.* or 18*s.* per pound. One hears also in Russia of "blossom" tea, which consists of only the dried flowers of the tea plant, and of other choice growths, the best of which are not brought to England at all. There is one kind of yellow tea, I am told, costing as much as five guineas a pound. The Emperor of China is supposed to enjoy its monopoly. A friend of mine, who received a few pounds as a present, tells me she did not think it distinguishable from that sold at 5*s.* a pound. Blossom tea is well known throughout Russia, and is mixed in the proportion of two ounces to one pound of ordinary tea.*

caravans to Peking. These concessions increased the traffic enormously, and the influence of the business transacted on the frontier extended from Kiakhta all across Siberia and Russia, and even to the middle of Germany. Thus, from 1728 to 1860, the Kiakhta merchants enjoyed almost a monopoly of Chinese trade, and made fortunes estimated by millions of roubles. The treaty of 1860, however, opened Chinese ports to Russian ships, and thus dealt a severe blow to the Kiakhta trade; for up to that time only a single cargo of tea was carried annually into Russia by water. Before 1860, the importation of tea at Kiakhta was about one million chests annually, without taking any account of brick tea, and, previous to 1850, all trade done at Kiakhta was in barter, tea being exchanged for Russian furs and other goods, because the Russian Government prohibited the export of gold and silver money.

* When crossing the Pacific I fell in with a tea merchant homeward

In addition to ordinary and superior sorts, the Russians import, chiefly for consumption by the military and native populations, immense quantities of tea pressed into the form of tablets, or bricks, each of which weighs about 2 lbs. These bricks are made of tea-dust mixed with a common coarse sort made of twigs, stalks, and tea refuse, the whole being first submitted for a minute to the action of steam and then pressed into a mould. Some say that bullocks' or other blood is also mixed with brick tea, but I have not heard this corroborated. The tea-dust used for brick tea costs in China about 5*d.* per pound, the manufacture about 1½*d.* more, and the article bears a handsome profit. In 1878 the Russian manufacturers in China were said to have realized a profit of 75 per cent. This they cannot do, however, all the year round, for the making of the bricks goes on only from the middle of June to the end of September, during which season they work at it night and day.

Apart, however, from the trade which passes over the Siberian frontier, there is much in Kiakhta and Troitzkosavsk to interest the western traveller. Among other novelties are to be seen Mongolian cavalry dashing about the streets, the soldiers being known mainly by a piece of ribbon streaming from their hats. The united population of the two places amounts to nearly

bound from China, and from him I gathered that three-fourths of the Russian trade is done in medium and common teas, such as are sold in London in bond from 1*s.* 2*d.* down to 8*d.* per English pound, exclusive of the home duty. The remaining fourth of their trade includes some of the very best teas grown in the Ning Chow districts—teas which the Russians will have at any price, and for which, in a bad year, they may have to pay as much as 3*s.* a pound in China, though in ordinary years they cost from 2*s.* upwards. The flowery Pekoe, or blossom tea, costs also about 3*s.* in China.

5,000, who are supplied with provisions by both Russians and Chinese. There may be seen coming from their farms and gardens numbers of peasant wagons, as well as clumsy Mongolian carts, the latter on wheels without spokes, formed of large wooden discs, which oxen cause to wabble along. Common vegetables are to be had in abundance. A large square in the centre of Troitzkosavsk is used for a corn and hay market, and is provided in Russian fashion with a huge pair of scales sanctioned by the authorities. Here the vendors of agricultural and garden produce assemble, and generally manage to get rid of their stock and garden produce early in the day. Young chickens cost 4*d.* each, lemons in winter 1*s.* a-piece, and occasionally even double that price, and Cognac brandy 9*s.* per bottle. Troitzkosavsk is also supplied with excellent fish, but we found it difficult to get good fruit. Besides the market square at Troitzkosavsk, there are two public gardens at Kiakhta, and also a cemetery.

We went to the small prison, and found it a poor affair. The police-master told us he had received a letter concerning our intended visit long before, and had been expecting us. Where the information came from he did not say; but it served to remind us again that, though more than 4,000 miles from the capital, we were not lost sight of. This was the last place at which I heard of our coming having been announced beforehand, though a general at Petersburg had told me that I might usually expect this; for how, said he, are the Governors to whom your letter is addressed to know that your document is not forged unless they are advised that a letter has been given

you? and then, to illustrate his remark, he said that, on one occasion, a man, dressed like a gendarme, presented himself at Irkutsk with a forged letter and got a prisoner released.

I may add to the foregoing that Kiakhta was the last, and almost the only, place other than Petersburg where symptoms of a disaffected or revolutionary spirit came under my notice; and this in the solitary instance, that when an educated man in the town was shown in an English newspaper a portrait of Vera Sassulitch, the would-be murderess of Trepoff, I heard that he admired and praised her. As for Nihilism, I heard, in crossing Russia, so little about it that I am ashamed to say I left the country with very vague ideas as to what it is. I am not sure that I know much about it now, but an Englishman who has spent a large portion of his life in Russia and Siberia tells me there are various kinds of Nihilists. The mildest type, if they can be called such, simply want free speech and a free press, as do, I am told, all the "Slavophils"; the next wish for a ministry responsible to the people; but both these classes (which are supposed to be numerous) think the time not yet come, and that they must wait for further enlightenment of the people. With this opinion my friend agreed, feeling sure that at present the educated Russian and the moujik would quarrel, he said, if one were dependent on the other. The third class are the "black" Nihilists, who want the dethronement of the reigning dynasty and a republic, and who are willing to adopt any means, even the most criminal, to gain their end.

Of all this and its like I heard next to nothing after leaving Petersburg; there, however, great excitement

prevailed. I arrived only a few days after one of the attempts on the late Emperor's life, and a friend called to tell me they were at their wits' end to know what to do. Turning back his coat collar, he showed me sewn thereon the certified badge of his calling, so placed that it might be ready to show the police, if required, at a moment's notice. The English, he said, were strongly suspected, and he doubted whether he should be safe in affording me his usual protection and kindly services. He had told one of his Russian friends that I had arrived in the country for the purpose of distributing books and tracts, but the Russian did not believe that I could be come for such a charitable object, but thought I must be sent by the English Government. The rumours afloat respecting the English were both numerous and ridiculous. The authorities had not then succeeded in finding the press from which were issued the Nihilist placards and papers, and, as the ambassadors' residences are privileged places, supposed to be closed against the police, it was affirmed that the secret press must be there. My friend told me he heard it said that "proclamations" against the Russian Government could be bought at the English Embassy for a rouble each. Another rumour said that the Russians were persuaded that the centre of the revolution was in the English Embassy, and that they had even thought of setting fire thereto, with the hope of securing, in the confusion, the revolutionary papers. I smiled on hearing this, and concluded that it could be only the most ignorant of the people who believed such puerilities; but on repeating it as a joke to a Russian fellow-traveller from Moscow, he said he quite believed that

the forbidden press was in the Ambassador's house, and that the revolutionists obtained their money from the English Government. I heard, too, in Petersburg that it was thought by the lower orders that the Nihilists obtained a large portion of their funds from the "International" in England.

All this smoke and rumour, however, we left behind on quitting Moscow, and though we may perchance have been watched, I was never conscious of it. I mention this because as some were surprised at my going to Russia when in such a disturbed condition, so others may be curious to know how this disturbance affected me as a traveller; and though I am far from supposing that my very limited and isolated experience is worth much, or perhaps anything, in showing the political condition of Russia and Siberia at the time of my visit, yet I wish to convey the impression that Russian atrocities and inflamed horrors, as posted on placards and shouted by London newsboys, shrink into very much smaller dimensions when the scene of action is reached. Such at least has been my invariable experience, and to this I shall further allude hereafter.

They have also at Troitzkosavsk a church in which "a miracle" seemed about to be recognised during our sojourn; for, on the first night of our stay, after I had gone to bed, a woman came to the party of friends with whom I had left Mr. Interpreter, and told them that she could see a strange halo of light in the church, but whether caused by celestial radiance or angels' wings she did not say. The party turned out, therefore, my interpreter included, and made for the church, into which they could not gain admittance,

and which was apparently empty, though they managed at last, by looking through a crevice or window, to descry a lamp burning before a glass ikon, which happened to slant at such an angle as dimly to reflect through the darkness the rays of light to the spot where they had been seen by the woman. This took away the sense of the miraculous, not altogether to the satisfaction of some of the party, who seemed to think "there was something in it." *

* In Russia one continually meets with these sacred pictures, said to work miracles: and sometimes *relics*, though the latter not so often as in Roman countries. In two places I have been curious enough to inquire for the evidence that might be given to substantiate the so-called miracles. Of course, in many cases, the wonderful things said to have been performed are enveloped in the mist of antiquity, but one explanation offered at Novgorod, in the Yuryef monastery, was to the effect that the very man who had shown us the bells, many years ago, saw two women arrive at the place, who were screaming and possessed of the devil, but that on coming to the grave of Father Fochi (the great saint of the place) they were made whole. The second explanation offered me, at the Spasski monastery in Yaroslaf, was of a similar character. A certain ikon, before which I was standing, was alleged to have been placed in the church in 1828. A girl, 17 years of age, was seized by demoniacal possession, and dreamed that she saw a certain picture. On waking, she was said to have searched through the town for the picture, which, on looking through the church window, she recognized in the ikon before us, and from that day she was made whole! Such are some of the stories upon which rest the alleged power of ikons to work miracles. But, as I have said before, the Russians are by no means "sceptical." Consequently, if a church or a monastery only possesses a well-known miracle working ikon, the fortune of the place is made. Persons come from far and near to pray before it, bringing, of course, a present, and not unfrequently adding a thank-offering if the prayer be heard. A poor man, having a diseased leg or a sick cow, purchases a little silver model of his leg or his cow, and hangs it upon the ikon (I have seen several such), or, if the offerer be rich, he brings gems to adorn the wonder-working picture. These pictures, on special occasions, are taken to the houses of the faithful, being carried through the streets in procession, the people doffing their caps; and I have seen the more devout, in the hope of receiving a blessing, run between the bearers and under the picture carried upon their shoulders. At Kasan we saw the coffin of Bishop Gregory, from which chips are cut by sufferers to place on their wounds to be healed.

The great ecclesiastical wonder of Kiakhta is its cathedral, said to be the finest in Eastern Siberia, and to have cost 1,400,000 roubles, equal at the time of building to at least £150,000. It was built at the expense of the Kiakhta merchants, and possesses some excellent bells.*

In bells, the Russian Church is the richest in the world—so far, at least, as regards their size. The largest we have in England—that of Christ Church,

The monk who accompanied us, and who was, intellectually, superior to some I have met, said that it was a well-known fact, and believed by all, that the relics of saints placed upon diseased parts of the body, and used with faith, are good for healing. The bishop, he said, died 200 years ago, but the wood of the alleged coffin did not appear to me to have reached the age of 200 weeks, and the whole concern looked modern.

* This reminds me that, though allusions have often been made to churches, I have not yet described what a Russian church is like. It should be premised, then, that the ideas of an Englishman and a Russian differ widely as to what a grand church should be. Given an English committee, money in hand, and they say, "Go to; let us build a church to the praise and glory of—the architect;" whereas a Russian merchant, his pocket full of roubles, seeks him out a lapidary, to whom he takes emeralds, rubies, diamonds, and pearls; a smith, to whom he consigns poods of silver; and a cunning workman, who can emblazon and embroider priestly robes and ecclesiastical garments. The consequence is that the English ecclesiologist, standing before "a fine church" in Russia, finds almost nothing upon which to expend his vocabulary of architectural terms. He sees merely wood, stone, or brick and plaster buildings, not too evenly finished, and whitewashed over in such a fashion that, but for their proportions, they would not be thought too good for an English homestead.

The Russian churches are so far alike that they are all modelled on the Byzantine style of architecture—a Byzantine church having been described as a "gabled Greek cross, with central dome inscribed in a square." On the exterior, besides the central, there is sometimes a western dome, often there is one at each angle of the square, and, occasionally, one at each end of the cross. Accordingly, instead of spires, the eye of a traveller in Russia becomes accustomed to cross-crowned domes, which, as they are brightly painted and sometimes covered even with gold, and furnished with bells, affect both eye and ear not unpleasingly.

On entering a Russian church from the west, the internal arrangement

THE GREAT BELL OF MOSCOW AND IVAN VELIKI TOWER. *Page* 333.

Oxford, weighing 7 tons—is but a baby compared with many in Russia. The largest in Petersburg weighs 23 tons; "Great John," in the older capital, weighs 96 tons; whilst the old "Tsar Kolokol," or the King of Bells, in Moscow, weighed originally nearly 200 tons, or 432,000 lbs. Reckoning their value at 18 silver roubles per pood, we get a price for our Oxford bell of £1,100; and for that of the largest one of Moscow of £32,000. This monster bell is 26 ft. high, and 67 ft. round!

It was neither its bells, however, nor its architecture that made Kiakhta cathedral "a fine church," but rather its costly fittings. It has two altars, both of silver; a candlestick with numerous rubies and emeralds, and a large chandelier studded with precious stones. More striking still, perhaps, was the profusion of objects made of solid silver, such as the "royal doors," which are said to weigh 2,000 lbs.; and, above all, the

is seen to be fourfold: first, the narthex, or porch, which was anciently for catechumens and penitents; next the nave, or body of the church; then a narrow platform, raised by steps, answering to the choir; and, beyond that, the sanctuary. The sanctuary is divided into three chambers: the central one being called "the altar," in which stands the holy table, and behind it the bishop's throne; the southern chamber forming the sacristy, where are kept the vestments and treasures; whilst that on the north is for preparing the sacramental elements. The sanctuary is parted off from the choir by a high panelled screen, called the *Ikonostasis*, pierced by three doors, the centre opening being called the "royal gates," on the north side of which hangs a gilded sacred picture of the Virgin, and on the south side a picture of our Saviour, and the patron saint of the church. The remaining parts of the screen are covered with other pictures, upon the frames and coverings of which, apart from their artistic value, an almost fabulous amount is sometimes lavished. The precious stones on the picture of Our Lady of Kasan, for instance, in Petersburg, are valued at £15,000; whilst, at Moscow, one emerald on the picture of the Holy Virgin of Vladimir is valued at £10,000—the value of the whole of those on this latter ikon being estimated at £45,000.

ikonostasis of gold and glass, or crystal—the value of the last, no doubt, being considerably enhanced by the cost of carriage to so remote a spot. There were also several paintings, executed at great expense in Europe.

We mounted the tower, and from thence had a view of the surrounding country and of the three towns of Troitzkosavsk, Kiakhta, and the Chinese Maimatchin. On a slight elevation, about a mile to the north, at the head of an open sand-valley between two ranges of moderately high hills, lay Troitzkosavsk, with its 4,600 inhabitants, its school, houses, shops, Government buildings, and a number of persons and officials who could not strictly be called merchants. There is also a large building which formerly was the Custom House, where the duties on tea were collected.* Below us was Kiakhta, with about 400 inhabitants, the abode of Russian mercantile aristocrats and their belongings, making a population, according to Hoppe's Almanack, of about 5,000. The town lies snugly in a hollow, between hills of sand and fir-trees, well sheltered from northerly winds, and opening out southwards towards Mongolia. A small rivulet, called the Bura, runs through the hollow, and, turning westward to the sandy plain, makes its way at last into the Selenga. The country round looks sandy and dry, which is in keeping with the meteorological conditions of the place. Southerly winds prevail, and there is a deficiency of moisture in the atmosphere; hence they have only a slight fall during the year either of rain or of snow. So much is this the case that wheeled

* All duties are now arranged at Irkutsk, and the annual quantity of *leaf*-tea (exclusive of brick-tea) that passes through is upwards of 5,000 tons.

vehicles are used all through the winter, and goods and travellers at that season are thus driven some miles out of Troitzkosavsk to the spot where snow begins, and sledges are usable. Kiakhta is about 2,500 feet above the sea level. The greatest cold in 1877 was in February, when the thermometer stood at 42° below zero; whilst the greatest heat that year, namely 100°·5, was in August.

On the first morning after our arrival, our host sent us in his carriage for a drive of 20 miles to Ust-Keran, the summer residence of Mr. Tokmakoff, where also we expected to find a fellow-countryman, who, we heard, was Professor of English in the gymnase at Troitzkosavsk. It was a fine day, and our horses dashed along over a wide extent of country, somewhat suggestive of Salisbury plain. We saw very few people, but, happening to meet a vehicle, we pulled up, and my interpreter, having descended, went to the carriage to know if we were taking the right road. He called to me that we were right for Madame Tokmakoff's, upon which I shouted, "Ask him if the Englishman is there!" whereupon someone in the carriage replied, "I am the Englishman." It was pleasant to hear this spoken in my native tongue, and I hastened to make the acquaintance of Mr. Frank M——, who was spending his vacation as tutor, and teaching English, in the very family to which we were going. He therefore turned back, and accompanied us to Madame Tokmakoff's, by whom we were heartily welcomed, and where we were reminded of home by the sight of cricket-bats, stumps, and sundry other English things.

The great event of the afternoon was driving some miles further to a Buriat lamasery, or monastery,

inhabited by priests, for whom I had taken some Scriptures; but none of them spoke Russian, and as we could not well make them understand, I left the books with our friend to give when an interpreter could explain, and this little commission he kindly performed. I shall have occasion to speak of this lamasery hereafter. On our way we had to cross a river, the vehicle being put on a raft, and the horses swam through the stream—not considered extraordinary in these parts, for the same evening we saw a dozen horses returning from their work, and when they came to the river, they plunged in of their own accord, and swam across.

One of the men on the bank was very much puzzled to make me out, especially as I asked questions, and made notes of the replies. He seemed to think there might be "something up," but said that "I wore no official clothes, and so he could not tell what sort of a '*tchinovnik*' I was." His suspicions, however, abated, and his vanity seemed tickled, when he was told that I had come from a very far country, that I was anxious to know about their manners and customs, and made notes of what I heard and saw to tell my countrymen on my return. After inspecting the monastery, we drove back to Kiakhta the same evening, having spent a particularly agreeable day.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MONGOLIAN FRONTIER AT MAIMATCHIN.

Outlook into Mongolia.—Town of Maimatchin without women.—Visit to a Chinese merchant.—Refreshments.—Attendants.—Purchases.—Tea-bricks for coin.—The town.—Buddhist temple.—Chinese malefactors.—Their punishments.—Chinese dinner.—Food.—Intoxicating drinks.—Route to Peking.—Travellers.—Modes of conveyance.—Manners of the desert.—Postal service.

AS we stood on the top of Kiakhta church, we could see, as already observed, the three towns of Troitzkosavsk, Kiakhta, and Maimatchin. The former two were like other Siberian towns, but southwards there lay before us something decidedly new. Just over the border was a veritable Chinese town; then came a broad plain, covered with sand and herbage, with the horizon bounded by the hills of Mongolia, beyond which the imagination was left to picture its capital, Urga, and, further south, the great wall of China. Before continuing our journey eastwards, therefore, I shall describe our visit to Maimatchin, and offer a few observations upon the route over the Mongolian frontier to Peking.

Mai-ma-tchin signifies, in Chinese, "buy and sell," and so is applied to this border town as a "a place of trade." It has a population, we were told, of 3,000, and differs in one respect, at all events, from all the cities upon the face of the earth, in that the inhabitants

are all of the male sex. Not a woman is to be found in the town, a baby's music is never heard there, and the streets are void of girls and boys. Not that the men, however, are all bachelors, for some of them have wives and families in China proper. Nor are they all woman-haters or henpecked husbands. We did indeed hear of one man, a British subject, who so far agreed with Solomon as to the undesirability of living with a brawling woman, even though it were in a wide house, that he had fled from his island home, and retired to a house-top in the wilds of Siberia, where he is living in prosperity, and whither his spouse has not pursued him. But the fact is, that among the curious arrangements of the Chinese at the time of their early treaties with the Russians, and in order that their celestial subjects might not become rooted to the soil, but consider themselves as sojourners only, they have forbidden that women should live in Maimatchin. Hence a paterfamilias of Maimatchin, if he wishes to visit his wife and children, must undertake a month's journey across the desert on the back of a camel, and return by the same means; so that a few such journeys may well give wings to his desire speedily to make his fortune and return home.

We took the opportunity of paying an afternoon visit to Maimatchin on the first day of our arrival at Kiakhta, Mr. Koecher kindly accompanying us. After passing out of the wooden gate of Kiakhta we found ourselves on a piece of neutral ground, about 500 yards wide, between the two empires. On the south side is a palisade pierced for the principal gate, shielded from view by a high wooden screen some eight or ten paces from the wall. Behind this screen we entered Mai-

matchin, and found ourselves in a new world. The town is built inside a strong wooden enclosure, about 400 yards square, with four or five mud-paved streets. They are regular, however, tolerably clean, and, for China, wide,—wide enough perhaps to allow of a London omnibus being driven through them. The houses are of one storey, built of unburnt bricks of mud and wood, and are thus solid and tidy, and are surrounded by courtyards. At the entrances are screens that shut out the river from the street, which are painted with diabolical-looking figures, to frighten away evil spirits. This represents, however, the houses of the well-to-do merchants. Towards the southern part of the town are the mean, windowless houses of the poor, which have little of the neatness and propriety of the above.

We were taken first to visit one of the Chinese merchants named Van-Tchan-Taï; and on entering his courtyard we found it surrounded by a number of doors, some entering the warehouses, the kitchen, out-houses, etc., and one leading to the shop and dwelling-place of the merchant. The door consisted of a suspended transparent screen, admitting the air, and yet keeping out flies and insects. The window-frames were ornamented and covered with paper. None looked into the street, but all into the courtyard. Inside the house were two compartments, an outer and an inner. In the outer chamber we were seated on a raised platform, or divan, which serves for a sleeping-place for the clerks and assistants by night, and for a dining-place by day, when the bedding and cushions are neatly rolled up and ornamentally arranged. This platform is heated by a flue beneath, and on the edge

in front is kept, always burning, a small charcoal fire, which serves for lighting pipes and heating grog. Round the wall hung illuminated texts, from the writings of Confucius, and various pictures, one of which we were told was a representation of the god of happiness. And a very stout personage he looked! But this is strictly in keeping with Chinese notions, for they delight to load their deities with collops of fat, prosperity and abundance of flesh in their eyes having great affinity. A number of little birds were in the room, not in cages, but on perches resembling those on which parrots are kept in England.

The merchant invited us to drink tea, and told us that the Chinese use this beverage without sugar or milk three times a day; namely, at rising, at noon, and at seven in the evening. They have substantial meals at nine in the morning and four in the afternoon. When they discovered I was English, they were curious to know all about us, making various inquiries, trying to imitate our words and sounds, even to laughing, and examining carefully such things as were shown them, as watches, pencils, and knives. We were no less curious to pry into their affairs, and learn of them all we could. The merchant employed 23 "clerks," 18 in Maimatchin, and the remainder at a branch establishment in some other part of the world. We did not make out, however, whether this number included shop assistants, warehousemen, servants, cooks, etc., or whether it consisted only of actual writers. They seemed all dressed alike, from the master downwards; that is, in a suit of blue nankeen, and black skull caps. Suspended on the wall, and covered with paper to keep them from dust, were two or three white

straw hats, of depressed conical shape, with a horsehair tassel on the top, seemingly reserved for summer use or gala days. One of the attendants had a black dress edged with white, and on inquiry he was found to be the coachman in half mourning. Chinese full mourning must not be of silk, is all white, and worn 100 days after the death of a relative, during which time the head is not shaved. Black and white is afterwards worn for three years, one of its features being a small white ball on the top of the cap. As the servants stood about waiting on us, their discipline appeared to be very much of the patriarchal character; none seemed greater or less than another, except it were the chief clerk, who received, we found, about £30 a year; whilst the "boys" received from £5 and upwards, their food being in all cases provided. This chief clerk cultivated a straggling moustache, which is the privilege of all Chinese men after they arrive at 30 years of age. He had also very long nails, protruding, perhaps, half an inch, which evidently were considered beautiful. It is the custom of Chinese gentlemen and ladies to have long nails, that other persons may be aware of their rank in society, for with such impediments they could not labour. This senior also seemed fond of his pipe, which held just so much tobacco as enabled him to take five good strong whiffs only, and he then blew out of the pipe, with a peculiar noise, the remainder of the tobacco and ashes.

Whilst sipping our tea we proceeded to make purchases. The principal articles of Chinese export into Russia are teas, cottons, nankeens, silks, good satins, rhubarb, and many articles of curiosity and ingenuity. The exports from Siberia are generally furs. As we

sat in the merchant's shop, it was a matter for conjecture as to where the merchandise was kept, for it was not visible. A number of articles, however, were brought forth from mysterious cupboards and drawers, and we heard that the Chinese allow as little of their property as possible to be seen by the authorities, lest they should be more highly taxed. So far, therefore, as appearances go in a Chinese shop, the American dealer's window-notice would be eminently appropriate: "If you don't see what you want, ask for it." We did this, and found it successful. My first purchase was a piece of silk called Chin-chun-cha, supposed to be of sufficient measure for two suits of clothes. This silk is undyed, and washes and wears so well that it is a favourite material throughout Siberia for gentlemen's summer suits, and sometimes for ladies' dresses.

The Chinese are fond of having a couple of balls in the hand, at idle times, to roll and rub one over the other with the fingers, and so play with; for the same reason, probably, that the Turks like to have beads in the hand. Several of these balls were offered to me. One pair was of Chinese jade, which, on being rubbed together, emitted flashes of electric light. Gilt buttons, too, were shown as a rarity, but their marks betrayed that they came from Birmingham. We bought some embroidered purses of native workmanship, and cups and saucers. The saucers are of a lozenge-shape, and of metal, with an indentation fitted to receive the bottom of the cup, which has no handle. Hence, in drinking the tea, it was not necessary to finger the cup, but merely to hold the saucer and drink from the cup resting therein. Some of the drinking vessels were of wood, but lacquered and covered with a varnish which

made them quite capable of holding boiling water. Our most comical purchase, perhaps, was a pair of furred ear-pockets, connected by a piece of elastic, for use in frosty weather.

After taking refreshment, we looked about the house and yard, into the kitchen, which was clean enough, and into the warehouse, with its piles of chests of tea, and were amused to see them take a hollow iron auger, something like a large cheese taster, and drive this into the corner of a tea-chest to bring thereout a sample handful of the fragrant herb. I contented myself, however, with buying a brick of tea, as a greater curiosity. It measures about nine inches by six, and is three-quarters of an inch thick, and might better be called, as it once was in Germany, "tile" tea. This article was formerly used for coin in certain parts of Siberia, and is so still in Mongolia. The owner of a circus, since my visit, made his way through Kiakhta to Urga. The stud and its riders greatly delighted the Mongolians, who are excellent horsemen, and, as the proprietor accepted the "current coin of the realm," his cashier's office presented the unusual appearance of being filled to overflowing with bricks of tea! We had cause, therefore, for congratulation, that we had not to carry a quantity of this very inconvenient form of cash.

After leaving the house we wandered through the streets, examining the wares exposed for sale, like those we had seen on the Chinese stalls in the market-place of Troitzkosavsk, and the looking round at which, in both places, gave us much amusement. We found all sorts of Chinese knick-knacks; and the poorest attempts at cutlery, in the shape of knives, scissors, and razors,

that ever I saw. The razors bore a strong resemblance to miniature hatchets, and, on steaming across the Pacific, I observed that their use was not confined to men, for the Chinese women think so much of having the hair cut away smoothly from the back of the neck, that one female on board was seen thus acting the barber on behalf of her sister. Beads and hats were likewise exposed for sale, brushes and combs, pieces of flint and steel, and Buddhist rosaries; which last, evidently, were considered finely perfumed, but we thought the smell abominable. A piece of Chinese vanity we saw consisted of circular felt pads, highly dyed with rouge, with which the people rub, and so redden, their faces. Several of these curiosities we bought, bargaining for the price by signs, to the mutual amusement of buyers and salesmen.

We were taken to the Buddhist temple, the precincts of which appeared to comprise the houses of the governor (or, as he is called, the *zurgutchay*), and the chief priest; also a theatre, and something like a prison. In the court of the temple were placed two or three cannon, which are fired daily when the governor is going to sleep. The theatre, we found, was open only on fête days, and, if the report of travellers be true, the plays are sometimes grossly obscene. This, however, is only in keeping with the pictures seen in the houses, and sold openly in the streets, which are too licentious to bear description.

We saw in the court of the temple two malefactors, who had iron rings round their necks, attached to which were chains, about five feet long, with enormous links, and of great weight, weighing, I should judge, in all, upwards of 50 lbs. They had chains, too, upon

their hands and legs, and, being exceedingly dirty and ill clad, they looked somewhat ferocious. One of them had his chain coiled about his shoulders for more convenient carriage, and when he saw that I was curious he allowed it to drop towards the ground, showing me the full length of his punishment. I bought the man's rosary for a souvenir. We saw, also, in Maimatchin, another kind of Chinese punishment, in the shape of a wooden collar, made of 6-inch plank, about 2½ feet square, and put about a man's neck. It was said to be more than 100 lbs. in weight, and the unfortunate wearer was prevented by its size from putting his hand to his mouth. He used therefore, in feeding himself, a long wooden spoon, but he looked anything but comfortable. His accusation was written on the collar, setting forth his name and family, and he was to wear his collar night and day for a month, and that for *fighting!* but I am not clear whether it was for an ordinary pugilistic encounter, or for attempted violence to a superior.

As we walked about the streets it was plain that, though we were distinctly in the Chinese empire and not in Russia, yet that the people of the two border towns were on the most friendly footing. Chinese merchants visit the Russians freely, drink tea, smoke cigarettes, and chatter,—not "pigeon English," but "pigeon Russian." To this good feeling I presume it was that we were indebted for an invitation to dine, two days after, with the merchant upon whom we called. We were particularly anxious to do this; for to eat a Chinese dinner at Maimatchin had been one of the curious treats I had promised myself when thinking of pushing on so far as Kiakhta. At the

same time, Mr. Michie's declaring that a Chinese dinner, to which Kiakhta merchants take their friends, was "a feast most Europeans would rather undergo the incipient stages of starvation than come within the smell of it," had rather terrified me as to the horrors one might be expected to eat. I determined, however, to place bread on one side of my plate and water on the other, and then martyrise myself for the sake of gaining experience, to say nothing of showing myself a person of good breeding in Chinese eyes, by tasting *everything;* and I hoped that, if anything particularly nasty came into my mouth, it might be neutralized or speedily swallowed by the aid of a piece of bread or a draught of water. Things were not so bad, however, as I had feared, and we were none of us made ill. Calling on our way to dinner at Mr. Tokmakoff's, I begged a small loaf of half-white bread; and, thus prepared, we presented ourselves at the house of Van Tchan Taï.

There were five in the party, which included Mr. Koecher, our Russian host; Mr. M——, our fellow-countryman; Mr. Interpreter; myself, and a Russian friend. We were shown first into the inner compartment, and seated on the divan, whilst they brought us tea, dried fruits, and confections, such as candied ginger, dried walnuts and Mandarin oranges, salted almonds, and sugared ditto, melon seeds, etc., etc. We then adjourned to the outer chamber, where the dinner was spread on a table. But what a table! It was just about three feet square, and on this were placed, as a commencement, no less than 10 dishes, besides our own plates. These dishes, or saucers, of meats were replaced to the number of 30. Further east I met a

man who told me that when he dined at Maimatchin they gave him 64 dishes! At this tiny table we were seated, and each was provided with a small saucer, three inches in diameter, half filled with dark-looking vinegar, into which we were supposed to dip everything before carrying it to the mouth. Of this I soon got tired, and began to eat things *au naturel*, that is as far as possible; but most of the courses were so disguised by confectionery and culinary art that we had to ask of almost every plate, What is this? Happily the plates were so exceedingly small that to taste of each did not seriously strain one's eating powers; and by tasting first, and then asking what it was, all prejudice was taken away till it was too late to have any. But we discovered that among the dishes we had eaten were beans, garlic, a kind of sea-weed cooked like seakale, and a green kind also; likewise radishes cut in slices, swallows' eggs boiled, and rissoles of meat; various sorts of marine vegetables, and, I think, birds' nests. Towards the end of the feast appeared a *samovar*, but not like the Russian article of that name,—the difference resembling that between an "outside" and an "inside" Dublin car, of which an Irishman said that, with an outside car the wheels were inside, whereas with an inside car the wheels were outside. So with the Chinese samovar, the boiling part was exposed to view, and contained the soup, in which were small pieces of meat, vermicelli, and rice puddings, the size of tennis balls, for the eating of which they brought us chop-sticks—I suppose, that we might try our hands, for at the earlier part of the meal they had given us knives and forks. Chop-sticks are a pair of cylindrical rods, rather

longer, and not quite so thick as lead pencils, which are both held between the thumb and fingers of the right hand, and are used as tongs to take the food and carry it to the mouth—an operation by no means easy to the unpractised. Our host did not sit at table, or eat with us, but stood looking on, and giving orders to his boys or "clerks." Each guest was provided with a tiny cup about an inch or a little more in diameter, and perhaps half an inch deep. Into this, at an early stage of the proceedings, was poured, from a diminutive kettle, hot *mai-ga-lo*, or Chinese brandy, tasting, it was said, somewhat like whisky. It is exceedingly strong, though not so potent as another kind of which we heard, called *khanshin*, and which not only makes a man intoxicated on the day he drinks it, but if he takes a glass of water only on the morrow, the intoxicating effect is repeated. When they came to pour me out brandy I declined, the propriety of which our host recognised at once; for when my friends told him I was a "lama," or priest, he said that "*their* lamas were not allowed to drink brandy." It was comforting, therefore, to find that we had at least one good thing in common.

Whilst we were in the house of Van Tchan Tai there came in a Mongolian lama, to whom I was introduced as an *English* lama. The Mongolian lamas do not confine themselves to spiritual functions; for this man was a contractor for the carriage of goods across the desert to and from China, which leads me to say something of this curious journey. The Kiakhta-Peking route was not that followed by the earliest embassies sent overland from Siberia, nor by Marco Polo in his marvellous travels in Tartary. In fact, it

is remarkable how very little has been known, until lately, concerning this part of Central Asia, and how little is known still.*

After the building of Kiakhta and Maimatchin, the route across the desert was of course extensively used by the caravans, though I am not aware that it was followed by any Englishman or celebrated traveller till within the past quarter of a century.†

There are six Englishmen, four of whom I have met, who, as well as some ladies, have travelled this Mongolian route within the past 18 years.‡ The

* We owe some of our early geographical information about Eastern Mongolia to the rupture between the Russians and Chinese on the Amur. The Chinese took several prisoners, and transported them to Peking, subsequently allowing Russian priests to be sent to minister to their spiritual necessities. When, in course of time, the prisoners might have returned, they had learned so to like their quarters, that they chose to remain; whereupon "the spiritual mission" was kept up by sending new priests at intervals of ten years, and thus the Russians learned something of the unknown country through which these functionaries travelled.

† Daniel De Foe made his celebrated "Robinson Crusoe" to re-visit his island, and afterwards land in China, where he met with a Jesuit missionary who took him to Peking. Then, crossing the desert, he came to the Argun and Nertchinsk, and so proceeded to Tobolsk and crossed the Urals to Archangel. This, of course, is fiction; but it may be that De Foe, who was never abroad in his life, and who published his "Robinson Crusoe" in 1719, had heard of a route used in his day across the Mongolian desert. When we come to the interesting writings of the Roman missionary Huc, we have, of course, a good deal of information about Mongolia; but his route lay in the south along the great wall of China towards the Himalayas, and not at all in the north.

‡ One is Mr. Howell, formerly a British resident in China, who crossed from Shanghai to Kiakhta; another is Mr. Wylie, who was connected with the British and Foreign Bible Society, and who crossed from Kiakhta to Peking; but neither of these gentlemen has favoured the public, as far as I am aware, with information as to his wanderings. In 1863 Mr. Michie undertook "the Siberian overland route from Peking to St. Petersburg," and wrote an account of his Mongolian travels, which was the first English book that had appeared on that part of Asia. Mr. Michie has been followed by three other English writers. In 1869, by Mr. William Athenry Whyte, F.R.G.S., who wrote, "A Land Journey from

traveller, however, who has given us the most solid and scientific information about the part of Mongolia of which we are speaking is the Russian Colonel Prejevalsky, who spent three years, beginning in 1870, by travelling first from Kiakhta to Peking, then turning northward to Manchuria, and afterwards following in the tracks of Huc not quite to Lhassa, but as far as the Blue River, or the Yang-tse-kiang; and then, turning back, did the most daring thing of all, crossing the desert of Gobi from Ala-shan to Urga and Kiakhta. This journey had never before been attempted by a European, and was accomplished in the height of summer, when sometimes the party could obtain neither pasture nor water.

The distance between Kiakhta and Peking is a thousand miles, and Europeans who wish to make the journey have the choice of two modes of conveyance, either by post-horses or by caravan camels engaged by special bargain with their owners. So, at least, says Colonel Prejevalsky, though Mr. Milne tells a different tale, for he had intended to cross Mongolia in company with a Russian officer by courier horses; but he found that, according to the agreement between the Russian and Chinese Governments, it was allow-

Asia to Europe, being an account of a camel and sledge journey from Canton to St. Petersburg, through the plains of Mongolia and Siberia;" in 1875-6, by Mr. John Milne, F.G.S., who crossed Europe and Siberia to Kiakhta, Peking, and Shanghai, and read a paper concerning his journey before the Asiatic Society of Japan; and, in 1877, by Captain W. Shepherd, R.E., who returned "homeward through Mongolia and Siberia," and wrote a short account in the Royal Engineers' Journal. I heard some of these travellers spoken of by the residents in Siberia, and the Russians seemed mightily surprised that Captain Shepherd should have taken such a journey alone, and unable to speak a word of their language. I suppose Messrs. Howell and Wylie did the same, but I have heard of Captain Shepherd's exploit as far away as the Crimea, and so lately as last autumn.

able only for such couriers as were Russian subjects to take the horse road, and therefore he was obliged to go the ordinary caravan route by camels. He made an agreement with some Mongol carriers, that they were to take him from Kiakhta to Kalgan, near the great wall of China, in 30 days, for which he was to pay them £15. For every day less than thirty he was to pay ten shillings extra; for every day beyond that time they were to pay him ten shillings. There was also a clause that a tent, fire, and water should be supplied. The ordinary procedure of the caravan in winter is to be on the move till about seven or eight in the evening, and then stop for tea, and travel on till midnight or two in the morning. A halt is then made for sleep, and all start again by eight or ten. They eat in winter only once a day, and, according to Mr. Milne's account, a winter journey across the desert is anything but comfortable. Mr. Michie, however, and Captain Shepherd, who travelled in milder weather, give a very different account, and speak in pleasant terms of a nomad life. It is so utterly different from any European experience of motion and living that, though it has several drawbacks—and a month is rather too long to be wholly agreeable—yet those who have passed through such a phase of travel look back upon it as a pleasant change from the humdrum life of a homeward voyage in a P. and O. steamer.

The pace at which the caravan proceeds is provokingly slow, and the jolting of the rude, clumsy camel-cart makes walking, for a great part of the day, preferable to driving; but there is game to be shot, and the solitude of the desert is now and then relieved

by arrivals at Mongolian *yourts*, or tents, where, conversation being the only form of newspaper they know, there is a general wagging of tongues, and a shower of questions to be asked. The Mongol's one notion of wealth is the number of a man's flocks and herds; and thus, if the Englishman is asked what he is worth, he has to translate his riches into thousands of sheep, horses, and bulls, and then explain his possessions. Again, the monotony of the way may be relieved occasionally by meeting with the Russian post.*

The manners and customs of the Mongolians are, in many cases, exceedingly interesting, as taking one back to the habits of a nomadic and pastoral people. But it is not necessary to detail them here, as we shall have before us, in a subsequent chapter, the Buriats, who are a branch of the Mongolian race; and in treating of the one we shall be in many respects treating also of the other.

* Postal communication was established by treaty between the Russians and Chinese in 1858 and 1860. The Russian Government organized, at its own expense, a regular transmission of both light and heavy mails between Kiakhta, Peking, and Tien-tsin. The Mongols contract to carry the post as far as Kalgan, the Chinese the rest of the way. The Russians have opened post-offices at four places, Urga, Kalgan, Peking, and Tien-tsin. The light mails leave Kiakhta and Tien-tsin three times a month, the heavy mails only once a month. The heavy mails are carried on camels, escorted by two Cossacks from Kiakhta; while the light mails are accompanied only by Mongols, and are carried on horses. The light mails are taken from Kiakhta to Peking in two weeks, whilst the heavy mails take from 20 to 24 days; and the cost of all this to the Russian Government is about £2,400 a year, the receipts at the four offices amounting to about £430.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FROM KIAKHTA TO CHITA.

Farewell ceremonies.—Writing home of changed plans.—Caravans.—An iron foundry.—Buriat yemstchiks.—Methods of driving.—Salutations.—Insignificant post-stations.—Visit to a missionary to the Buriats.—Russian missions in Japan.—A remarkable meeting.—The Yablonoi mountains.—Chita.—Visit to the Governor and prison.

WE had determined, after dining at Maimatchin, to continue our journey eastwards. Mr. Koecher, however, would not let us go without giving us a supplementary dinner; for the Chinese spread is looked upon as a matter of curiosity rather than of genuine gastronomy, and we did not expect to get another respectable meal for many hundreds of miles. After this supplementary dinner, therefore, we prepared to start. The hospitality and kindness of the Siberians to departing friends is unbounded; and, among other customs, they have one method of doing honour to a guest at a feast which is considered a mark of great respect. It is called the *podkeedovate*, and is done by seizing the unfortunate victim and laying him flat on the extended and clasped hands of two rows of guests, who toss him up and catch him. When Mr. Collins, their first American visitor, was at Kiakhta, they tossed him up in this manner to the ceiling, which he touched, palpably. In our own case, happily, we were spared this honour, and were dismissed with the repeated

shakings of the hand of which the Russians are so fond; provided, however, it be not over the threshold. Twice I found myself transgressing in this respect—once to an American, who had become half Russianized, and once to a Russian lady. Both of them smiled, and asked me to come right in before shaking hands. What superstition they have upon the subject I know not. Another Russian custom with departing friends is to drive alongside for a few miles, perhaps to the first post-station, and then take a last farewell. This our host did when we left Kiakhta on the evening of Wednesday, the 16th July, and we were then fairly started for a drive of 600 miles. We passed along the road by which we came as far as Verchne Udinsk, or, as I have called it, "the Amur and China junction." Here we took the opportunity to post letters to England, to say that to return from hence would be to leave my work half done, and that we were going on to the Amur, from which Mr. Interpreter was to turn back, whilst I was to continue to the Pacific, and so reach home by completing the circle of the globe; and as I thought to finish the journey in person sooner than a letter would cross Asia and Europe, and I did not know what holes and corners I might get into, or how be detained, my friends were exhorted not to be alarmed if they heard nothing of me for many days. And the exhortation was needed, for I subsequently got into two places from which I could not stir, nor well communicate my whereabouts, so that, notwithstanding my warning, serious and anxious doubts were entertained for my safety.

Whilst travelling eastwards we had frequently met caravans of carts carrying tea. These caravans some-

times reach to upwards of 100 horses ; and, as they go at walking pace, and when they come to a river are taken over by ferry, it is not matter for surprise that merchandise should be three months in coming from Irkutsk to Moscow. In winter the rivers, of course, present no difficulty, and hence this season is on some accounts preferred for transport. The number of drivers required for a large convoy is not numerous, and they lighten their work by hanging a bundle of hay on the hinder part of every cart, so that a horse, if hungry, takes good care to keep up with his leader. As we proceeded from Verchne Udinsk we met trains of two-wheeled carts with manufactured iron.* There was one driver to every four or five carts, and this driver had a dormitory on one of his loads, consisting of a rude frame, two-and-a-half by six feet, with a covering of birch-bark, and under this, clad in a sheepskin coat, a man contrives to sleep for many an hour of the night and day. They usually travel about 16 hours (though not at a stretch) out of the 24, and in the summer graze their horses at the side of the road.

We had now left the great highway between China and Europe, and of this we were sternly reminded by

* It is not unlikely that the iron here alluded to had come from Petrovsky Zavod, which is about 100 miles south-east of Verchne Udinsk. These ironworks were established during the reign of Peter the Great, and at one time were worked by convicts; but, so far as they are in activity now, free labour, I believe, is employed. This Zavod was formerly of importance to the locality. The engines for the first steamers that Russia placed on the Amur were made here. Guns, also, have been cast and bored by Russian workmen. There is plenty of coal, too, in the neighbourhood, but it is not much used, as wood is plentiful. I heard very little of the operations carried on at present, but it seems that in the whole Trans-Baikal province there were produced, in 1877, of cast iron 482 tons and of wrought iron 280 tons. Thirty years ago, Petrovski wrought 18 tons of bar iron annually.

the amount of shaking to which we were forced to submit. Also we were introduced to a new set of yemstchiks; for most of our drivers now were Buriats, who tie up their horse's mane like a horn between his ears, and who, like the Russians, have a wonderful knack of sending their horses along without harassing them, the driving being done by the voice and by threatening with the hand. Whip-cracking is unheard in Siberia, and the long, slender, snapping whips of Western Europe are unknown. The Siberian uses a short stock with a lash of hemp, leather, or other flexible substance, but having no snapper at its end. The Russian drivers talk a great deal to their horses, and the speech they use depends much upon the character and performance of the animals. Do they travel well? Then the driver calls them his "brothers," his "doves," his "beauties," his "jewels." On the contrary, an obstinate or lazy horse is called a variety of names the reverse of endearing. He may be called a *sabaka*, or dog, and his maternity disrespectfully ascribed to the race canine. Sometimes the driver rattles off his words as if the creatures understood all the praise he is giving them, after which, on proper occasion, he storms at and scolds them as the veriest hags and jades he ever drove. But I do not remember that this fashion of talking to the horses was so observable among the Buriats, though they drove exceedingly well.

These people have a curious method of salutation, as have several of the peoples with whom we were brought in contact. The Chinese, for instance, fold the hands together, and raise them up and down several times. The Mongols hold up their thumb

to salute, and to clench a bargain one places his hand on the sleeve of the other. The Buriats do much the same, whilst the Russians shake hands for everything, and if they are friends they also kiss.

As we drove along we saw abundance of black and white jackdaws; small birds, like a cross between a canary and a linnet; and, on the distant hills, flocks of sheep. Further south, I have been told, herds of camels are reared, for the sake of their wool, which in these parts grows to a considerable length. The post-stations we passed were far apart and poor, and the villages few. In these last live many Buriats, some Russians, and a few Jews. In one village we saw some very good-looking Jewish women, whom I saluted with a word or two of Hebrew. This, and the showing of our podorojna that we were English, attracted attention to us as strangers. Not long before, some Chinese ambassadors had passed the same way; and one yemstchik, hearing that we were foreigners, thought we too must be ambassadors, and inquired whether he should go and put on his best suit, from which, however, we excused him.

On the evening of the second day after leaving Verchne Udinsk, we reached Koordinska, where lives a Russian priest who is a missionary to the Buriats, and upon whom I wished to call, though, as it was getting towards midnight, I feared we might find the good man in bed. But it was "now or never," and I therefore persisted in going to the house, notwithstanding the Buriat yemstchik's remonstrances, which I afterwards thought may have proceeded from the fear that he should be bewitched, or in some way influenced by the missionary, for I could not get him

to stop his horses within many yards of the house. The missionary did not appear at first particularly amiable on being visited at such an unusual hour; but, when he found that we had good books to give him, he began to change his demeanour, and readily imparted to us information respecting the progress of the mission, telling us that during the previous year 300 Buriats had been baptized east of the Baikal, and more than 1,000 on the west. He showed us, however, that he had already a sufficiency of the Buriat Scriptures—of the same edition, in fact, as those we were distributing—and he did not care to accept more, which rather led me to surmise, what was afterwards confirmed, that the amount of knowledge required by the Russian priests of their converts before baptism is very slender. I do not know either how far they press upon the Buriats the study of the Scriptures, or whether the Buriats are averse to the book. The old man at Selenginsk, Ivlampi Melnikoff, told us that many copies of the Scriptures were left in the hands of his father when the English missionaries took their departure, and that the Buriats would not receive them. They were therefore handed over to a Russian priest; but he was speaking of things as they were forty years ago.

When our missionary friend found that we were really interested in his work, he pressed us, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, to drink tea; but this we declined, as we could not keep the post-horses standing. He was very eager to tell us, before we went, that the Russians were carrying on a successful mission to the Japanese (the liturgy being sung in Russian style in the vernacular), under the directorship

of the Archimandrite Nicolai; and the missionary, dwelling in the Buriat wilderness, was considerably perturbed because someone in Japan had been writing a book, attempting to show that Confucius was greater that Jesus Christ; and as I said that I expected to pass through Japan, he begged that I would get a copy of the life of Confucius, and consult with the Archimandrite how the heretical book might be extinguished. This was the first I heard of the Archimandrite, but, on reaching Nikolaefsk, I found him exceedingly well spoken of by a Lieutenant Yakimoff, who gave me a letter to him to deliver on my arrival in Japan.* Accordingly I hoped to see the said Archimandrite Nicolai, but, before I reached Yokohama, he had returned home to be consecrated bishop. I therefore thought no more of the matter till last autumn, when my hopes were singularly and unexpectedly fulfilled, whilst staying at Kieff on my way to the Caucasus. My companion and I were trying to find someone in the Pechersky monastery who could speak English or French. At last appeared with the

* On my voyage I gathered from a Russian captain that there were in Japan 7 priests, 95 catechists, and 2,000 members, all of whom, not excepting even the priests, were converts to the orthodox Russian Church. In 1876, £1,174 were spent on this mission, which is the only Pagan mission, as far as I know, that the Russians have in foreign parts; and they think their Japanese work a great success, for in the *Oriental Church Magazine* for March 1880, the Russian editor says: "In 1879 the (Russian) Church in Japan numbered a total of 6,000 members, an increase of 2,000 having taken place during one year"; and he adds, "Though the other Christian Churches control over 320 missionaries, and have in their possession enormous pecuniary means, still our (Russian) missionaries have succeeded in gaining full and exclusive control over the northern part of the island of Nipouna, and compete most successfully with their Roman Catholic and Protestant brethren in the central part of the island." "This brilliant success is mainly attributable to the chief of our Japanese mission, Father Nicolai."

monks a tall man in a cassock, dressed like the others, save that his cassock was brown. He said he could speak English, and, after having taken us round to see the sights, he inquired of me where I was labouring in England, or, as he put it, "where I was in service." I told him, and then asked where *he* was "in service." "Oh," said he, "very far off." "Well," I said, "where?" "In Japan," he replied. "Then," said I, "you must be the Father Nicolai, to whom I had a letter last year from Siberia, and who has lately been consecrated bishop." And so it turned out, and thus we had casually fallen in each other's way, thousands of miles from the place of our expected meeting. I dined with him, and we then parted, he to continue his return journey to Japan, whilst I pushed forward to Mount Ararat.

All this, however, was in the unknown future when we were talking to the Russian missionary at Koordinska, who regretted that our visit was so short, and whom we left to continue our journey all night to Chita. In doing so we traversed hilly roads, and on the following day had some extended views as we approached the *Yablonoi*, or Apple-tree Mountains. This range runs in a north-easterly direction, right through the Za-Baikal province; and when, after gradually rising from Verchne Udinsk, which is 1,500 feet, we reached the summit of the range, 4,000 feet above the sea, we were then about 20 miles from Chita. Before us a well-defined range of mountains bounded the horizon to the east, while to the north and south the valley stretched away for miles. We had a fine morning for the descent, and bounding along over a rolling prairie, where herds of cattle were

grazing, had a beautiful view as we approached the town. Moreover, we were at last on the eastern side of the great Altai chain, and consequently the rivers before us differed from all that we had yet seen in Siberia. All the others had been flowing northwards to be emptied into the Arctic Ocean, whereas in the river Chita, from the left, joining the Ingoda from the right, the current was flowing eastward, through a delightful valley, to find its way, 2,000 miles off, into the Pacific. We had before us now, in fact, one of the valleys of the head waters of the Amur, of which valley Baron Rosen says that it is remarkable for its flora, and is called the "garden of Siberia."

Chita stands on the left bank of the Ingoda on a height, bounded on two sides by lofty mountains. To the north lies Lake Onon, on whose shores Genghis Khan, as he marched westwards, held his court of justice, and in whose waters he drowned the condemned. Below this point the Ingoda is navigable for boats and rafts. During the early years of the Amur occupation, much material was floated down from Chita. The town was founded in 1851, when it had a population of 2,600; now it has 3,000. Many of the houses are large and well fitted, and all are of wood. We found shops, at which, however, we had to pay 1*s.* a pound for loaf-sugar, and white bread cost just three times what we had paid for it at Tobolsk.

The Governor's house was the best in the place, and there we presented our letters. His Excellency, M. Pedashenko, gave us a kind reception. I had met on the road, at a post-station, the father of Madame Pedashenko, and he had given me an introduction to his daughter; but Madame was unwell. The Governor,

however, spared no pains to do for us all he could. On learning that I wished to visit the penal colony and gold-mines of Kara, he telegraphed that arrangements might be made for my being conveyed thither; and after this we proceeded to inspect the prison in the town. Outside the building was a black cart, which might be placed in a similar category with our old-fashioned English stocks. Formerly prisoners were taken in this cart to the market-place, and there exposed as outlaws and felons—their accusation being carried on the breast, and a notification attached that they had "lost all their rights." This punishment was said to be abolished now, but I heard of its having been used at Blagovestchensk as lately as the previous year.

The prison at Chita contained 169 prisoners, and cannot, I suppose, be that in which the 30 Decembrists were confined in 1826; for Baron Rosen speaks of Chita in his day as a little village of 300 people. At the time of our visit, they were expecting a new place of confinement to be built—not a day before it was wanted; for the Chita prison was apparently the oldest, and I thought it the poorest and dirtiest, we had seen. The prisoners, too, were shabbily clad, and dirty. One of them was reading a religious book lent him, I think he said, by the priest; but there was no prison library. Indeed, it was very rare to find one, though at Ekaterineburg we were told that a prisoner who wished to read might have a prayer-book. Several of the Chita prisoners were from Russia, and condemned to hard labour. There was a carpenters' shop, in which some were forced to work, and others did so for their own pleasure. Speaking generally, those in

the building appeared to be enjoying an easy time; for the doors of the wards were open to allow their going in and out of the yard as they chose, and many were lying about sleeping in the sun. We were told that they found it difficult to sleep at night by reason of vermin, and so were sleeping instead by day. This illustrates a remark of Goryantchikoff in "Buried Alive," to the effect that his prison was never free from fleas even in winter, and that in summer they increased. In the prison kitchen we saw them cutting up rhubarb leaves to put in the soup (fresh cabbage not being ready at the time of our visit), which reminds me of another remark of Goryantchikoff, who writes as if it were a normal thing with him to have black-beetles swimming in his soup. His remark about fleas I can readily believe; but by "black-beetles" I presume he refers to little brown insects, about half an inch long, called "*Tarakans*," which swarm in the houses of the Siberian peasants. Happily, however, they are non-belligerent, and I was told by an Englishman that the people are not averse to them. Why they should daily walk into the copper to be boiled in Mr. Goryantchikoff's soup, I know not; but one thing about prison soup I do know, that, in the irregular, uncomfortable (I was going to say half-starved) condition in which I have sometimes travelled in certain parts of Russia, I have more than once tasted prison soup, of which, but for appearance sake, I would fain have eaten, not a mere spoonful to give my opinion thereon, but a plateful to satisfy my appetite. I should not have chosen that, however, seasoned with rhubarb leaves.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BURIATS.

Country of the Buriats.—Their physiognomy and costume.—Habitations.—Mongol yourts.—Hospitality.—Fuel.—Possessions in cattle.—Character of Buriats.—Their religions.—Buddhist Buriats.—The soul of Buddha.—The lamas.—Their celibacy, classification, employments, disabilities.—Buddhist doctrines.—A prayer cylinder.—Christian Buriats.—English missions.—Reports of English travellers.—Results of Russian missions.—Distribution of Buriat Scriptures.

SOON after leaving Verchne Udinsk, we entered upon the vast steppe which occupies a large portion of the Trans-Baikal. Here we found ourselves in the heart of the Buriats' country. We first met with these people a few miles on the western side of Irkutsk, and their physiognomy at once told us they belonged to a different race from any we had seen. They have very large skulls, square faces, low and flat foreheads; the cheek-bones are high and wide apart, the nose flat, eyes elongated, the skin swarthy and yellowish, and the hair jet black. With the men the hair is allowed to grow upon the crown of the head, and is plaited into a queue that hangs down their backs. What remains is cut close, but not shaved, as with the Tatars. The head-dress of the women is exceedingly rich, and consists of silver, coral, polished beads of Ural malachite, and mother-of-pearl. They wear their hair in two thick braids, which fall from the

temples below the shoulders, and the unmarried girls interweave their braids with strings of coral. Several women had many silver ornaments hanging on their breasts, and in some cases a straight rod at the back of the head stuck out horizontally for several inches on

MISS BOU-TA-TYO, A BURIAT YOUNG LADY.

either side, and to this the hair was tied. I was desirous to purchase one of these head-dresses for a curiosity, but they were not to be had at shops. The stones and metal are purchased, and made up by household skill. I was, however, somewhat taken aback on finding that their value frequently amounted to twenty or thirty

pounds sterling. At a post-station we asked a Buriat what he would take for his hat. To our surprise, he asked the modest price of fifteen roubles merely for the silver knob at the top. The Buriats are said to wear no linen, but a wealthy bride's dowry sometimes consists of 40 cases of the richest furs.

As for their habitations, the Buriats are such inveterate dwellers in tents that though they are supposed now to be civilized where they come in contact with the Russians, yet they make a tent of the house by piercing a hole in the middle of the roof, and have the fire in the centre of the floor. When visiting Madame Tokmakoff, she had a Buriat man-servant, for whom a Russian house was provided, but in which he could not be happy until he had thus readjusted his dwelling. We entered a Buriat house at Cheelantoui, although only the woman was at home. There was within a rude wooden bench, on which we were invited to sit, and on it was lying a pair of coral ornaments for the head. These the woman, on our noticing them, immediately put on, and she then invited us to drink tea. To have declined would have been considered highly unpolite. Even among the Russians, a general pleasantly told me that he took a refusal to eat food in his house like a slap in the face. Moreover, we were anxious to stand well in the good graces of our Buriat hostess, for we wished to be admitted to the Buddhist temple, and she was the only person in the place through whom we could communicate in Russian with the lamas. But to see the tea served, and have to drink it, was no small trial. Over the fire hung a large open iron pot, full of a bubbling liquid covered with scum. In this was a ladle, which our fair hostess

filled and refilled, and emptied back into the pot. Then, scraping the scum away, she took a ladleful of the decoction, poured it into cups, and gave us to drink. We were told it was tea flavoured with salt. I only hope it was nothing worse, but it will hardly be thought matter for surprise if, after tasting it, I had an accident, upset the beverage, and declined a second cup. We had a good look, however, at the furniture of the dwelling, the most interesting item of which was a family altar, something like a small sideboard with drawers. On it were round bronze cups of liquor, and other offerings. There were also about the room some objects of ornamented metal, betokening clever workmanship.

This represents the Buriat in his civilized condition. One gets a better idea of his native habits and antecedents by going away from the haunts of the Russians, or even into the "land of grass," as their Mongolian brothers call their desert. There they live in tents, which, like those of other Siberian aborigines, are constructed with poles meeting at the top, but covered with felt instead of deerskins. The hospitality of all Mongol tribes is unvarying. Every stranger is welcome, and has the best his host can give; and the more he consumes, the better will all be pleased. The staple dish of the Mongol yourt is boiled mutton, but it is unaccompanied with capers, or any other kind of sauce or seasoning. A sheep "goes to pot" immediately on being killed, and when the meat is cooked, it is lifted out of the hot water and handed, all dripping and steaming, to the guests. Each man takes a large lump on his lap, or any convenient support, and then cuts off little pieces, which he tosses into his mouth. The best piece is reserved for the guest of honour, and, as a mark

of special attention, is frequently put into his mouth by the greasy fingers of his host. After the meat is devoured, the broth is drunk, and this concludes the meal. Knives and cups are the only aids to eating, and as each man carries his own "outfit," the dinner-cloth and service does not take long to arrange. The entire work consists in seating the party around a pot of cooked meat. The Buriats are famous at drinking brick tea, infusing with it rye meal, mutton fat, and salt obtained from the lakes of the steppe. I suspect it was this we had to taste at Cheelantóui. So important an article of food is this tea to the Buriats, that they sometimes lay by stores of it as money. In dry situations, this substance will remain a long time undeteriorated; and consequently on the steppe an accumulation of it is often thought a better investment than herds and flocks.

In the northern parts, the Buriats procure wood for fuel; but in the southern parts, and with the Mongols in the desert, this article is scarce, and they use instead sun-dried camels' dung, which they call *argols*, from a Tatar word which signifies the droppings of animals when dried and prepared for fuel.*

The Buriat implements for striking fire used to be preferred to European, and commanded a high price among the Russians. They are made of plates of the best tempered steel, from four to six inches long,

* The collecting, pounding, moulding, and drying of dung is, further south, an important branch of commerce. Argols are of four classes. In the first rank are the argols of goats and sheep, which make so fierce a fire that a bar of iron placed therein is soon brought to a white heat. The argols of camels constitute the second class; they burn easily, and throw out a fine flame, but the heat they give is less intense than that given by the preceding. The third class comprises the argols of the bovine species; these, when thoroughly dry, burn readily, and produce no smoke. Lastly come the argols of horses and other animals, which, not having

stitched to a bag for holding the tinder, the bag being of red leather, and tastefully ornamented with silver and steel spangles. The English and Swedish matches have now driven them out of the Russian market.

The ordinary occupation of the Buriats is that of tending cattle, the number of their herds reminding one of the flocks of the Hebrew patriarchs. Mr. Stallybrass told me that, when he was living at Selenginsk, he knew rich Buriats to possess as many as 6,000 or 7,000 sheep, 2,000 head of horned cattle, and 200 horses; and Captain Cochrane mentions the case of the mother of a Buriat chief who possessed 40,000 sheep, 10,000 horses, and 3,000 horned cattle, besides a large property in furs. In a sparsely-populated country, therefore, a man's children are very useful in looking after his cattle; and since it is necessary to be constantly removing to fresh pastures, it will be understood that this state of things presented to the missionaries a double educational difficulty, namely, unwillingness on the part of the parents to lose their children's services, and their constant change of residence. The same difficulty besets those still who would carry on missionary and educational work among other wandering tribes of Siberia. The Buriats, in 1876, numbered 260,000—the largest of the native populations of Eastern Siberia. As yemstchiks we thought them livelier than the Russians, and there was a manly

undergone the process of rumination, present nothing but a mass of straw more or less triturated. They are soon consumed, but are useful for lighting a fire. This fuel is called *kiseek* in Russia, and in the southern governments was the only kind available for the poorer inhabitants, wood being very scarce and dear. The discovery of coal, and the establishment of manufactories, has wrought a complete change in the means of heating in Ekaterinoslaf. Kiseek was made from the dung of cattle and sheep, laboriously trodden under foot by women, and then sun-dried.

independence in their bearing, which easily accounted for the difficulty the Russians had at first in subjugating them. Moreover, they would seem not to be deficient in intellectual power, for the English missionaries taught some of them Latin, and had prepared an elementary work on geometry and trigonometry in the Buriat language. Baron Rosen also mentions that they play chess, having learnt it from the Chinese, and he says that the best player among his comrades, who were Russian officers, having on one occasion challenged a Buriat to a game, was beaten. The speech of the Buriats is a dialect of Mongol, rough and unsophisticated, with Manchu, Chinese, and Turkish corruptions. It is distinguished by its abundance of guttural and nasal sounds. Instead of true Mongolian letters they employ the Manchu alphabet, which is written in vertical columns from the top to the bottom of the page, the lines running from left to right. The only versions of the Scriptures in the Mongolian language are those of the Calmuck and Buriat dialects.

The religion of the Buriats is of three kinds: Shamanism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Shamanism, more or less like that of the other tribes of Siberia, would appear to have been their old religion; and it still lingers most, I presume, in the northern parts of their country, which are farthest from Buddhist influence. Buddhism, however, holds sway over by far the greater portion of the people, and was originally imported from Thibet.*

* At Lhassa, the capital of Thibet, dwells the *Dalai Lama*, who is the head of the Buddhist religion; and though his followers acknowledge him to be mortal, they believe his soul to be an immediate emanation from the essence of their supreme deity, Buddha. In places where this worship prevails are found religious communities gathered round the temples

BURIAT LAMAS AND MONGOLIAN INTERPRETER. *Page* 371.

The lamas, or priests, are treated with great reverence, and every Buddhist Buriat desires that one of his family should follow the priestly calling. Hence it comes to pass that the lamas compose a sixth—some say a fifth—of the population. When in full dress they are clothed in scarlet, and shave their heads all over, and their large ears standing off from the skull give them a curious appearance. They are supposed to observe the strictest celibacy; hence Mr. Michie observes that it is a tender point with a lama to be asked how his wife and family are; but Mr. Erman points out that their celibacy has the most prejudicial consequences. The use of spirits is forbidden to them, lest excess "should disorder the brain of the student of the divine oracles, and corrupt the heart by the bad passions it might engender." The use of tobacco also is denied them, and that for one of the best of reasons against smoking, because "it is conducive to indolence, and tends to waste leisure hours which ought to be devoted to pursuits affording instruction as well as amusement."*

Besides their religious employments the lamas

dedicated to the rites of their faith, and monasteries, or, as they are called, *lamaseries*, containing the various orders of priests. It was one of these we visited at Cheelantoui. When the great lama dies, it is held that his spirit immediately enters the body of another human being, who thus becomes successor to all the rights and privileges held by his predecessor, and some little difficulty often occurs in discovering who may be the favoured individual; but as the priests are the chief actors in the scene, their search is generally successful. Commonly the spirit is recognized as having animated some new-born infant, who is at once taken to the religious establishment and educated by the lamas in the mysteries of their faith.

* The lamas are divided into four classes. Those of the first are occupied with the study of doctrine, and with the tenets and mysteries of their faith; those of the second with the regulation of certain religious rites and ceremonies; those of the third busy themselves in the study and direction of their worship; the fourth class study and practise medicine,

engage in various branches of ordinary industry, especially in the manufacture of their own wearing apparel and their ecclesiastical furniture. A lama labours under one inconvenience, in that he is not allowed to kill anything, through fear that what he slaughters may contain the soul of a relative, or possibly that of the divine Buddha. Even when he is annoyed, says Mr. Knox, by fleas or similar creeping things, with which their bodies are often thickly populated, he must bear his infliction until patience is thoroughly exhausted. He may then call in an unsanctified friend, and place himself and his garments under thorough examination. So again, in connection with this difficulty about killing, Captain Shepherd relates an instance in which the lamas did their best to keep the law and yet evade it at the same time. The captain, in crossing the desert, had bought a sheep, and was somewhat in difficulty as to how the animal should be slaughtered. There were four in the party. The late owner was a lama, and could not take life; so was the guide; the captain was unwilling to turn butcher, and his Chinese servant did not know how. The captain would have shot the animal, but the owner protested. One of the lamas, therefore, took the sheep aside, threw it down, tied its legs, explained to the Chinaman the trick, and lent his own knife for the deed to be done, after which he turned and walked quickly to a distance. When the sheep was once killed, the lamas soon cut it up, had it cooked, and, of course, helped to eat it.

in which it would appear that some of them attain eminence, for when we arrived at Kiakhta we found Mr. Tokmakoff, on account of his health, was gone to Urga, the Mongolian capital, to be near a native doctor.

The Buddhist books teach the people that they will attain the highest wisdom if they honour the lama; that the sun itself rises *only* that honour may be rendered to the lamas; and that persons obtain pardon for the most enormous sins by showing them respect. Any offence against a lama annihilates the merit acquired by a thousand generations. Whosoever shows any contempt for these personages is said to be punished by accident, sickness, and all kinds of misfortunes, and so forth. One of their Siberian monasteries, or lamaseries, with a temple, is at Turgutu, midway between Verchne Udinsk and Chita; and I think I heard of schools there. I have said that we visited a lamasery at Cheelantoui. It was a small one, consisting of about half-a-dozen houses, one of which was the temple, where, if I mistake not, they worship daily at sunset, but into which, unfortunately, we could not enter, as the chief was absent. There were younger lamas present, some of them mere boys; but they either could not or would not understand us, and seemed afraid to grant favours. We saw, however, the praying machine. It consisted of an upright cylinder, from two to three feet high, and perhaps two feet in diameter. It was fixed on a pivot, and could be turned by a rope, to be pulled by the devotee, who secured by each revolution some thousands of invocations to Buddha. Sometimes these machines are turned by mechanical power, like a wind or water mill. This, of course, is easier, and as the quantity of prayer is more important than the quality, the latter method saves much trouble, and is popular.*

* Inside the cylinder is placed the oft-used prayer of the Buddhist, "*Om mani padme houm*," of which a Russian near the monastery said

The Buriats, who are Buddhists, have temples, ritual, an order of priests, and a considerable literature. With a religion so developed, it will not be difficult to account for its overcoming the older Shamanistic creed, nor will it be hard to understand what was told us by the Ispravnik of Selenginsk,—that of the two religions among the Buriats, with whom the Russian missionaries come in contact, they find the conversion of the Shaman Buriats tolerably easy, but the Buddhists are greatly opposed to Christianity.

We now come to that part of the Buriat people who are Christian. Perhaps it was an inquiry into the false religion of Buddha, under which so many millions of the human race are deluded, or perchance only a timid belief in the power of their own creed, that led our early travellers in Siberia, with one exception, to look coldly and unbelievingly on the efforts of the English mission to the Buriats; in connection with which the thought arises for how little the heathen world would have to thank the Christianity

the meaning was *Gospodi pomilui,—i.e.*, "Lord, have mercy upon us!" Its real meaning, however, does not appear to be very clear. Klaproth understood it to mean, "*O the gem in the lotus. Amen!*" and Huc paraphrases it into, "*O that I may obtain perfection, and be absorbed in Buddha. Amen.*" The lamas assert that the doctrine contained in the marvellous words is immense, and that the whole life of man is insufficient to measure its depth and extent. At Lhassa the formula is heard from every mouth—is everywhere visible in the streets, in the interior of the houses, and on every flag and streamer floating over the buildings, printed in Tatar and Thibetan characters. Certain rich and zealous Buddhists even entertain, at their own expense, companies of lamas for the propagation of the *mani;* and these strange missionaries, chisel and hammer in hand, traverse field, mountain, and desert to engrave the sacred formula on the stones and rocks they encounter in their path. There was a stone with inscriptions, in the temple yard at Cheelantoui; and I found other stones, bearing the *mani*, on the supposed site of a temple at Tyr, on the Lower Amur.

of England, if there were not some who take a more believing view than the travellers who go abroad, looking in a superficial way at what is being done, or sometimes not looking at all, and then coming home to pronounce missions a failure or an imposture. Captain Cochrane, for instance, speaking of the missionaries at Selenginsk, goes so far as to say, "For my own part, so small are my hopes of their success, that I do not expect any one Buriat will be really and truly converted." *

I have shown, however, that the English missionaries laid a solid foundation, taught several scholars, and translated the Scriptures, which translation the Russian missionaries have in their hands to-day; and whatever may have been the success or failures of the English, it certainly cannot be said of the Russian missionaries that they have no converts, for, such as they are, they count them by thousands.

The Ispravnik at Selenginsk told me there were about 40 men engaged in nine districts in the Russian

* He does, indeed, afterwards allow that what is impossible with man is possible with God; but goes on to insinuate that the missionaries knew of the uselessness of their work, but that they had "too comfortable a berth to be given up," and then he thinks, forsooth, that justice is not done to the people of England in so squandering money, etc., etc. Mr. Atkinson contented himself with a passing compliment to the character of the missionaries, and said that they were unable to make converts among the Buriats; whilst Mr. Hill, who visited Selenginsk, records that, "notwithstanding all their labours, not a single Buriat had been converted by them"; and then he quotes the testimony of a lady living on the spot, who said, "The missions only failed because the undertaking was beyond the power of man to accomplish unaided by more than his own genius. The missionaries had all the zeal and perseverance of the Apostles, but they wanted their power of working miracles, or the aid of some such startling circumstances as the history of religious revolutions has often presented to us, and without which all efforts at all times to convert the Buriats will be equally fruitless."

mission to the Buriats, though I am not aware whether some of them are not also parish priests. We called upon a priest at Verchne Udinsk to ask about the matter, and sold him some New Testaments and Gospels. He informed us that there were 15 mission stations among them, and that on the eastern side of Lake Baikal there were baptized annually about 300 Buriats, and on the western side more than 1,000. This was confirmed by the missionary upon whom we called further on, and it agrees tolerably with the general almanack of 1878, in which it is stated that in the Irkutsk diocese there were baptized, in the previous year, 1,505 of both sexes, including four Buriat lamas; though the number of converts given for the Trans-Baikal diocese for that year amounted to only 52, there being one lama to every 20 persons.

We had brought with us a number of copies of the Buriat Scriptures. Some of these we left at Irkutsk, some with the Ispravniks of Selenginsk and Troitzkosavsk, and some for the lamasery of Cheelantoui. Others we left at Chita with a view to spreading them over the district, as well as placing them in the prisons. I asked the Ispravnik at Selenginsk what he thought the lamas would do with the books. He said he thought they would first read them and then destroy them; but Mr. Stallybrass, on my return, was of opinion that they were likely to be deterred from destroying them by a feeling that they were holy books. In any case we gave the copies we had brought, and thus endeavoured to do what little we could for this interesting people, who, I doubt not, will gradually be absorbed into the Russian Church.

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